Reviewer’s report

Title: Socio-Demographic and clinical factors associated with health related quality of life in children of the Middle East with beta-thalassemia

Version: 1 Date: 12 March 2012

Reviewer: Montarat Thavorncharoensap

Reviewer’s report:

General comments: This is an interesting article, which illustrate the impact of thalassemia on health related quality of life, measured from both patients and parent in Middle East countries. The followings are comments and suggestions that’d help improving the quality of the manuscript, hence, increasing the usefulness of this manuscripts;

Major compulsory revision:

1. For the Patients and methods:
   a. The authors should specify the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to recruit the subjects. Did you include only beta-thalassemia major?
   b. The authors should state clearly when and how the PedsQL was administered to the patients and their parents (at the hospitals while waiting for treatment or after receiving treatment? For those who came to Italy to receive stem cell transplantation, PedsQL was given before or after receiving the transplant? This is considered importance as it may affect the level of HRQOL you measured in the study)
   c. The rationale for each cut off points used in the analysis should be given to the reader (i.e. regular transfusion = pre-transfusion hemoglobin >= 9, ferritin values > 1,300 ug/dl, irregular iron chelation therapy = less than once a week.
   d. Please briefly describe how you selected the variables for multivariate analysis. Since the dependent variable (Y), the total score, is normally distributed. Please mention about the statistical method you use, whether the Y is the Log(total score) or else? The detail should be given in table 2.

2. For the Result:
   a. Are there any differences between patients receiving care at Italy and Middle East countries?

3. In the discussion:
   a. Please further discuss and compare the scores obtained from each domain (i.e. Is the total score is considered low as compared to normal child in Middle East countries? What is the most affected domain?) and also compare the findings with other previous studies.
   b. Please further discuss the factors found to be associated with HRQOL in your study and compared with those of the other previous studies. For example, this
study indicated that the delay in the start of iron chelation therapy is the factor that affects HRQOL, however, age at first transfusion, ferritin level as well as pre-transfusion hemoglobin are not associated with HRQOL. Please explain the possible reasons.

c. The differences between child and parent’s score mostly are from emotional domain. Could you explain why? Also, please compared with other previous studies that also compare the differences between parent and child in thalassemia or in other diseases?
d. Please mention the limitation of your study.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. For the abstract: The background makes the reader think that this article will discuss about the disease in Mediterranean countries but it is not.
2. Please describe the psychometric property of PedsQL (Arabic language) and mentioned whether it was used in previous studies?
3. In table 2: please proper label the heading of the table (Is it the Beta coefficient that was reported?)
4. Unit abbreviation: Please check with the journal’s requirement.
5. In statistical analysis: Descriptive measure for PEDsQL… please change to PedsQL

Discretionary Revisions:
1. In the background: Information on the usual care given of thalassemia patients in Middle East countries should be given so the readers can have the clear picture of the differences between patients in the Middle East and other parts of the world.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interest.