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

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Reviewer: Robert Yamashita

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   This is potentially a very important article. The question posed by the authors is very relevant and speaks to a major gap in the literature.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   The methods of the article are appropriate – and the authors provide a very good description of the instrument and the methods.

3. Are the data sound?
   The data appear sound. The lack of statistically significant differences for complication in this population is important (although should be expected). Too often there is only a focus on statistically significant differences – not the potentially more interesting lack of differences. Note the lack of finding – especially with regards to major sociodemographic characteristics speaks to a homogenous population.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   YES – but there appears to be some lack of “full description” of the procedures. For example, was the relationship between the BMT transplant centers in Italy and the middle east to a single clinic, or multiple clinics? The narrative implies a single middle-east center. It would be useful to know that.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   GIVEN what was provided – YES. BUT the manuscript clearly suggests a greater complexity. See 7 below.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   There is NO discussion of limitations. While this format has become “a requirement” they often do not add anything to the article – especially in this domain (the limitations discussion is, however, extremely relevant for clinical trial publications).

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
NO – one suspects that they are building on HRQOL work started under the broader rubric of Novartis phase IV clinical trials with deferasirox (which were actually modeled by the US Thalassemia Clinical Research Network).

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
NO – absolutely not. The authors “promise” in their title a discussion of the sociodemographic factors BUT the analysis of the data does not have any sociodemographic components – except for the basic demographic characteristic of gender.

What are the other basic demographic differences in the population – are there any age differences in the population?

The basic data set suggests that there are many sociodemographic characteristics that can be examined. For example, the report addresses 60 patients, 30 patients came to Italy for BMT. How does this group compare to the other 30? One would expect to see differences since the fact that 30 left the mid-east to go to Europe suggests that this group had the resources (?) or had the donor necessary for a BMT.

Are there any differences between the patient’s country for origins? A few countries are mentioned – how many subjects from each country? There is a suggestion of a migration between countries in the middle east – so, are the migrants from urban or rural areas in their home country? What were the reasons for the migration?

Was there a difference in socio-demographic characteristics of the patients that received delayed transfusion? This suggests that the patients were not being seen by a specialist – until they arrived at a center in the middle east (I infer this from the article, since the institutional organizational structure is not described, but the manuscript identifies patients from around the middle east).

9. Is the writing acceptable?
The manuscript is well written – and extremely readable.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

NO conflicts