Reviewer's report

Title: Health related quality of life in Middle-Eastern children with beta-thalassemia

Version: 2 Date: 14 May 2012

Reviewer: Montarat Thavorncharoensap

Reviewer's report:

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?
      Appropriate response was received.
   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)
      Appropriate response was received.
   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 \( \geq 9 \), ferritin values \( > 1,300 \) ug/dl, irregular iron chelation therapy = less than once a week.
      Appropriate response was received.
   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.
      Appropriate response was received.
2. For the Result:
   a. Are there any differences between patients receiving care at Italy and Middle East countries?
      Appropriate response was received.
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.
The details was given in table 4 but the authors should discuss in text about the comparison of the total score across studies as well as comparison of the most affected domain not just the description of each study. In addition, type of thalassemia patients (i.e. only beta thalassemia, etc) should be given in table 4.

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.

Appropriate response was received.

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?

Appropriate response was received.

d. Please mention the limitation of your study.

Appropriate response was received.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interest