Reviewer's report

**Title:** The epidemiology of hepatitis C virus in Egypt: A systematic review and data synthesis

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 15 September 2012

**Reviewer:** Basmattee Boodram

**Reviewer's report:**

The epidemiology of HCV in Egypt: A Systematic Review and Data Synthesis requires Minor Essential Revisions.

This is a well-executed systematic review of the literature to examine HCV prevalence and incidence trends in Egypt. The questions posed by the authors are well defined, the methods are appropriate and well described and the data are sound. However, the discussions/conclusions should additionally address the following:

1) The authors suggest that PAT is only one driver among many of HCV prevalence and listed a few others. They alluded to injection drug use, which is a major driver in many other countries. It would be helpful if the authors would provide some contextual data about the prevalence (if available) or distribution of injection drug use in Egypt.

2) The pattern reported from the literature on the high prevalence of HCV among children is interesting – and the authors suggest primarily vertical transmission. If available, it would be interesting to report more information about the mothers in these studies – e.g. are they more likely to be IDUs?

Furthermore, additional limitations not reported should be included and/or addressed including:

1) Along the lines of the limitations reported for variability in methodology and quality of the studies assessed, the authors should also consider/report variability in testing modalities. For example, was only a screening test used for antibodies? Was there confirmation testing (e.g. RIBA). The range of sensitivities and specificities of these tests may also impact reliability (e.g. false positives) of the reported prevalence/incidence estimates.

2) The four risk groups the authors generated have differing levels of heterogeneity. Its important to point out that that the population at “indirect and intermediate” risk appears to be a wide range of individuals –and estimates that include all of these groups mask sub-group trends.

**Other Minor Comment:**

Page 7: The authors used the term “IDUs” which should be defined the upon first use (i.e. injection drug users).
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 competing interests.