Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 4 February 2013

**Reviewer:** Leigh Anne Shafer

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript concisely summarizes the large wealth of studies exploring HCV prevalence and incidence in Egypt. It would make an excellent contribution to the literature on HCV epidemiology in Egypt and it is recommended for publication. The paper is much improved over the first version. A few further comments are:

Major Essential Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Edit: On p. 10, the sentence should read, “Of those, 150 records were found eligible for inclusion [in] the present article.”

Discretionary Revisions

2. Can the authors comment on the implications of only recording risk factors (for HCV) from the studies they examined, if those risk factors were considered statistically significant in multivariate analysis? So, for example, if transfusions were not statistically significant in 6 studies, but were statistically significant in 2 studies, only the results from the 2 studies with positive associations were used in determining the risk factors for HCV? Perhaps the authors can discuss this positive association bias.

3. The “Risk factors of HCV” section still appears less strong than the rest of the paper. As the main focus of the paper concerns the prevalence and incidence estimates among sub-populations (which is excellent), I wonder whether this section on risk factors shouldn’t just be removed from the paper and form the basis for a different paper? The one paragraph on risk factors states that age, history of PAT… etc, were the most common risk factors for HCV. But this is difficult for the reader to judge without more details summarizing the papers that explored these risk factors. Or without a more thorough analysis of your own, such as a pooled regression analysis, exploring the relative importance of each risk factor to HCV prevalence and/or incidence. Yet to do justice to this section would require significant additions, making this paper very long. (I am not adverse to leaving this paragraph on risk factors in the current paper – I just don’t think that it adds useful information because it is too vague. It may be better to remove it from the current paper, expand it immensely, and use it as a basis for a different paper.)
4. Figures 2 and 3 are great. Would it be possible to give different symbols to the pre-2001 and post-2001 results so that people who print the paper on a black-and-white printer can still distinguish the groups?

5. The text in figure 3 is very small and difficult to read. There may not be anything that can be done about this.

**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 interests.