Reviewer's report

Title: Hepatitis B virus variants in an HIV-HBV co-infected patient at different periods of antiretroviral treatment with and without lamivudine.

Version: 4 Date: 9 July 2004

Reviewer: Stephan Schaefer

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors describe the emergence of Lamivudine resistance variants in the genome of HBV in patients coinfected with HBV and HIV. The presentation of the data, the performance of the experiments and the discussion are clear and appropriate. However, serological data of HBV are missing completely.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct).

I am missing the serological data of the patient. If the authors suspect that this specimen may be missed by routine HBs-testing, then at least these data should be shown.

I am not satisfied with the description of the phylogenetic tree. I have the impression that the Brazilian Isolates - including the described isolate of the patient- are genotype A with the subgenotype of A coming from Africa. The authors must mention this more explicitly and should include a reference, e.g. Kramvis et al. J Gen Virol. 2002 Apr;83(Pt 4):835-9.

The nomenclature of the HBV subgenotypes is currently not fixed. The African Subgenotype A has been given designations like A', Aafr, Aa and A1. Thus, the authors should refer to one of the newer references and stick to the designations used there.

My personal favorite currently is A1. This is in keeping with the designations in genotype F (F1 and F2).

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None