Author's response to reviews

Title: A Population-Based Study to Investigate Host Genetic Factors Associated with Hepatitis B Infection and Pathogenesis in the Chinese Population

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Dr. Lê:

Thank you very much for accepting our paper. We have attempted to address the reviewer’s questions and have modified the discussion to reflect his concerns.

We thank the reviewer for critically reading our manuscript and for providing us the opportunity to revise our paper.

1) How would you stratify these patients to improve the quality of any study of management.

We have modified our text on page 13 to include the following:

Patients were stratified according to their infection status and the severity of their disease using stringent clinical and laboratory criteria. We anticipate that the identification of genetic risk predictors for different specific outcomes will inform clinical management of persons with chronic infection and lead to the development of better therapeutic agents.

2) What is your conclusion about the value of these measurements; does this affect clinical management?

By identifying genetic risk factors associated with specific outcomes, we may identify pathways that can be targeted by drugs, thus interrupting the progression to liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

3) Do these data lead to a theory?

Depending of the outcome of the study, it is anticipated that we will gain insights into specific pathways affected by chronic HBV infection, possibly leading to a theory. We currently have little understanding about the underlying mechanisms that predispose some individuals to severe liver inflammation while others remain asymptomatic.

4) What will you do with these findings? Will they give you an opportunity to teach others?

The results of this study will be published and hopefully replicated by others. Genetic identifying risk genes, if confirmed, will lead to new avenues of research and will eventually be applied to clinical prediction, diagnosis, and treatment thus providing additional tools to guide clinical management of HBV infection.
It has been a pleasure to use your online submission process. It was nearly painless.

With best wishes,

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