Reviewer’s report

Title: Hepatitis C virus prevalence and genetic diversity among pregnant women in Gabon, central Africa

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Reviewer: Nieves Fernández-Arcás

Reviewer’s report:

Ndong Atome et al. present a paper on HCV prevalence and genetics diversity in pregnant women in Gabon. The prevalence was evaluated with the result obtained in 947 samples with two different ELISA tests detecting antibodies to HCV, and the diversity by sequencing and phylogenetic analysis carried out in 11 samples.

After revising the paper I would suggest:

A) Minor essential revisions:

Seven samples gave ELISA POSITIVE results but in none of them was HCV-RNA detected. The possibility of ELISA false positive results in pregnant women should be ruled out or at least discussed. If this false positivity was confirmed, HCV prevalence in Gabonese pregnant women will range from 2.1% (no false positives, 20 true positives in 947 samples) to 1.3% (7 false positive, 13 true positives in 947 samples).

According to the CDC 22% of blood donors show a false positive ELISA to HCV. It is therefore most probable to have some false positive ELISA among the seven ELISA positive-RNA negative patients found in this study.

B) Discretionary revisions:

1.- A low number of samples were sequenced (11 out of 20).

2.- The eleven samples sequenced belong to genotype 4. In view of this result the authors conclude that the "predominant" genotype is 4 when in fact it is the only one found in this study. So genotype 4 does not predominate over any other simply because 4 is the only one detected. Probably the authors should insert a phrase like: "Only genotype 4 was found among the 11 samples genotyped in this study".

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

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'