Reviewer's report

Title: Hepatitis B Vaccinations Among Koreans: Results from 2005 Korea National Cancer Screening Survey

Version: 2 Date: 1 July 2009

Reviewer: James Fung

Reviewer's report:

General:
Thank you for the reply and the amendments made.

Major compulsory revision:
1. As per the initial review (point 5):

The authors have concluded that vaccination in this population is important for secondary HCC prevention, reduce liver cancer incidence, and mortality

In Asia (as in Korea) where hepatitis B is endemic, chronicity occurs with vertical/early horizontal transmission - and not acquisition of HBV in adulthood. Nearly all adults who acquire HBV in adulthood will clear the virus (as they are no longer immunotolerant). The risk of significant flare with acute hepatitis B and fulminant hepatitis is far greater in adults than the risk of HCC.

The mean age of the subjects is over 50 years old. In unprotected 50 year olds, the risk of HBV infection (apart from healthcare workers/promiscuous individuals etc) is likely to be low. The chances of developing HCC from acquiring hepatitis B infection at the age of 50 is likely to be extremely low. The majority of hepatitis B-related HCC develop after the age of 50 in people who have had almost lifelong chronic hepatitis B infection.

Therefore can the authors comment on these important aspects of HBV-related HCC, the risk of acquiring chronic hepatitis B infection in this age group, and the subsequent risk of HCC of these patients in their discussion before concluding that vaccination in this population will decrease HCC.

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 have no competing interests