Reviewer’s report

Title: Infection by the hepatitis C virus in chronic renal failure patients undergoing hemodialysis in Mato Grosso State, Central Brazil: a cohort study.

Version: 1 Date: 22 October 2006

Reviewer: Nicola Petrosillo

Reviewer’s report:

General
The article deals with a prevalence survey of HCV-Ab in six haemodialysis units in a Brazilian region, and with an incidence study of HCV-Ab seroconversions with an assessment of risk factors associated with. The seroconversion rate was very high, and at multivariate analysis the Authors found the following variables as independently associated with HCV-Ab seroconversion: length of time on dialysis, number of transfusions, and belonging to a unit with a high HCV-b prevalence.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
- Findings of this study are interesting but not original. There is no insight on the causes of HCV-Ab seroconversion, including intra- and extra-dialysis factors.
- Indeed, the Authors gave no information on the infection control measures and practices in those units that had a higher prevalence rate. What about understaffing?
- Conclusions are too generic and misleading. What is the role of the environment in HCV infection? Maybe the main cause is a break in infection control measures but we have no information on the differences in the two groups of dialysis units. Moreover, there is no information on the use of shared equipment of items. Indeed, it seems as in some units with a high HCV prevalence and incidence rates there is an epidemic factor not investigated by the authors.
- The Authors wrote that isolation of HCV-Ab positive patients was applied both in the units with higher and lower incidence rates. This is a confirmation that environment had no role in HCV spread in the units.
- Finally, there is no information on extradialysis factors such as surgical procedures, as evidenced in other studies.

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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)
- The background in the abstract is not a background
- English should be edited.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests