Reviewer's report

**Title:** Socio-demographic and Clinical Features of Irish Iatrogenic Hepatitis C Patients: A Cross-Sectional Survey.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 24 March 2009

**Reviewer:** Alessio Aghemo

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The study by McKenna et al focuses on an interesting issue in the field of chronic Hepatitis C: the socio demographic features of an ageing cohort of HCV infected patients in Ireland while addressing its clinical features in terms of hepatic and extra hepatic symptoms.

This aspect has not been studied in detail thus far, as correctly pointed out by the authors, since most studies to date have studied the impact of HCV on Qol more than on hepatic or extra-hepatic symptoms.

In my opinion the authors need to address some points before the manuscript can be accepted for publication.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

1) While the authors seem to acknowledge the study may be biased by the low response rate (28%) to the survey and by the fact that the studied population does not seem to reflect the general HCV population in Ireland (high rates of unemployment and of permanent disability), this is not stressed enough in the discussion and in the conclusions. Some comments explaining the potential biases the study might have and therefore mitigating the findings by the authors need to be added in the conclusions section.

2) The decision to categorize all symptoms reported by the population as being Hep-C related in the absence of another definitive cause might further complicate the interpretation of the data. In fact one cannot wonder whether the study is just reporting the symptoms of an ageing population (disturbed sleep, lower limb pain...) more than the symptoms associated to Hep-C. As a matter of fact, Symptoms were not associated with HCV virus positivity, confirming what I just mentioned. In my opinion the authors need to add data regarding symptoms of a similar non HCV infected population. A small control group would in fact make the data much easier to digest, if this is not possible adding some data from an historical control group (past published cohort) would strengthen the findings by the authors.

3) The Introduction section needs to be shortened as it runs way too long in my opinion, I would cut all the parts regarding liver disease progression which are redundant and concentrate more on the study background.

4) Table 3 needs to be redone as it is very hard to read in its current form. I
suggest to try and put Age group, Gender, Virus status, Mood disorders, haemophilia, CCI score and Duration of infection as columns on the first line, and Hepatic, Univariate, Multivariate, extrahepatic...... as lines. That could make the table easier to read.

**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'