Reviewer's report

Title: Lichen planus and Hepatitis C: a case control study

Version: 2 Date: 12 February 2004

Reviewer: Emel Erkek

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a concise clinical study (research article) investigating HCV seroprevalence in Iranian patients with lichen planus.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Do the authors have data on LP incidence and prevalence in Iranian patients? Considering a LP incidence of less than 1 % in the general population, the number of cases seem to be high within a two year period. Is the hospital a referral center for patients with lichen planus? In addition, prevalences for annular, atrophic and follicular LP which are 26.5 %, 9.5 % and 25.2 % respectively in the present study seem to be above average. The criteria for classification of LP variants is unclear.

2. Since ELISA assay can give false (-) and false (+) results, a control group comprising of non-LP healthy individuals enrolled at the time of the study would be more valuable both technically and ideally. Due to a trend in increase of HCV seroprevalence, data derived from blood donors obtained at a different period of time, performed with different assays of varying sensitivities may be misleading especially during statistical comparison.

3. Although nonerosive oral mucosal involvement has not been mentioned in the text, one of the patients in the table has this form of LP. Either the text or the table needs correction.

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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)

1. There are some written and grammar mistakes that need correction.

2. The exact level of transaminases along with normal levels should be provided in the table. The assays used for both HCV and transaminases should be detailed (trade names, cut-off values, sensitivity and specificity).

3. The discussion is too short and largely derived from a particular preexisting study. A discussion focusing on pathogenetic relationship of HCV with LP in general and of HCV with specific LP variants would be more valuable. In addition, a comparison of prevalence of HCV in normal population and in LP, based on the results of national studies can be useful.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the
major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None