Reviewer's report

Title: The Clinical Spectrum Of Patients In A UK Multidisciplinary Coeliac Clinics

Version: 1 Date: 7 March 2006

Reviewer: Jill x Swift

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors concern about the wide spectrum of presentation of coeliac disease and increasing awareness of these, particularly amongst GPs is commendable but their conclusions cannot be drawn from the audit data presented. Only a small number of patients have been studied but diagnosed over a 20 year period. No evidence is presented to show that symptoms at presentation have changed over that time or that serological tests have changed symptoms or time to presentation.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. The title on the front page and before the introduction vary - one or other should be used
2. the study conclusion (abstract para 6) that there is lack of awareness and underuse of serological tests by GPs cannot be drawn from this audit. The aim was to look at presenting symptoms and the conclusions must be that the majority do not present with diarrhoea or weight loss and that anaemia is common.
3. More detail is required about the clinic in which these patients were seen. Are all, or most local patients referred? Is it a tertiary referral centre for complicated cases? How representative are the patients who attend?
4. Cases were included who were diagnosed over 20 years ago. As serological tests were not available at that time it is likely that presenting symptoms would have been different to patients diagnosed in recent years. A comparison of presenting symptoms in those diagnosed in the 1980's compared with the 1990's and 2000's would be of interest but numbers in this audit are too small
5. para 13: the table of common comorbidities ?table 1 is missing.
6. Para 14: Numbers of patients should be stated - percentages have no meaning with such small numbers
7. Para 18/19: data should be stated in the results section not just in the table
8. Para 25: it is not stated whether the percentages with positive serology are from the total group or just the patients who were tested. I suspect the latter, in which case numbers are too small to assess sensitivity
9. Figure 4 is meaningless. No statistical conclusion can be drawn from this.

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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. Abstract results: less than half had EACH of the classical symptoms - do they mean had ALL or ANY of the symptoms?
2. Introduction para 4: many cases present with complications. ESPECIALLY with malignancy. This is incorrect. Only a small number will present with or develop coeliac-related malignancy
3. Methods para 7 'And presence of dermatitis herpetiformis' should be part of para 6.

4. Methods para 8: Percentages are not helpful as numbers are so small
5. para 37: 'findings are shown in table 2' - 2 has been omitted
6. Para 39: it is generally agreed that because DH is so itchy it is usually diagnosed quickly. It is unlikely that the other conditions listed are actually DH.

7. Para 44: Pernicious anaemia and PBC are stated to be relatively prevalent but because of the small numbers only 3 and 2 patients respectively had these conditions.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Abstract Aim: WAS to investigate not is
2. Abstract results: as this was an audit of patients attending clinic it is perhaps not surprising that none of them had a GI malignancy.
3. Introduction para: some screening studies have shown a prevalence of 1:87/1:100

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 importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.