Reviewer's report

Title: Meta-analysis: implication of IL28B polymorphisms in spontaneous and treatment-related clearance for hepatitis C patients

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Reviewer: Guangwen Cao

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and well written paper with the aim to assess the associations between single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) near the IL28B gene with sustained virologic response (SVR) and spontaneous clearance (SC). Forty-three studies were included, and in total, 18499 patients were studied for SVR and 2281 for SC. The authors concluded that IL28B polymorphisms influence both IFN treatment outcome and natural clearance of HCV. There is not a universal predictor SNP identified. The best genetic markers appeared to be different with ethnicity, genotype or type of infection. The results could be highly useful for more precise treatment decision making.

The methods in this paper are appropriately used and the data are well documented. Statistical analyses are sufficient detail and the results are reliable. But there are still some points need to be revised and illustrated.

Minors:
1. There are two reviews have been published about the relationship between IL28B polymorphisms and SVR. But the authors cited wrong articles. Please check carefully of 29 and 30 references.
2. There are so many figures in this paper. The author should organize the results in good way to present them explicitly. For example, analysis results of subgroup can be presented in a table for the three SNPs of rs12979860, rs8099917 and rs12980275 by varying of ethnicity, genotype and type of infection.
3. In conclusion section, authors use “the best genetic marker” to interpret the role of IL28B polymorphisms. It is hard to understand if author can not make reasonable explanation.
4. In supplemental figure 4, there are some markings that are misunderstanding, such as “Thompson et al (2010)a, Thompson et al (2010)b, Thompson et al (2010)c”. could authors make some explanation on it.
5. There two supplemental table 1, please revise.
6. Figure 2 is not necessary to be used on this paper, but can be treated as supplementary file.(discretionary revision)

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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