Reviewer's report

Title: Ringer’s lactate but not hydroxyethyl starch prolongs the food intolerance time after major abdominal surgery

Version: 2 Date: 15 October 2014

Reviewer: Nayer Youssef

Reviewer's report:

Dear Author,

It was a great pleasure and honor reviewing this paper. On the overall, good work. Find below my notes regarding your manuscript.

Major Compulsory revisions:

1- Page 3 line 19-26: This paragraph is a redundant repetition of the methodology. The introduction should be more about presenting a background of the topic and highlight the conflict and how this study will help resolve that conflict.

2- I think the question need to be more framed in the text especially that the FDA had a black box warning published in Nov. 2013 re: increased mortality, renal injury and risk of bleeding for the use of HES in some settings

3- Page 4 line 5: the author needs to comment on the sample size (either here or in the discussion) How did you reach that number? is it too small or adequate? Did it affect the results?

4- Page 5 line 1: The author needs to mention some information regarding postoperative analgesia and whether any long acting opioids or PCA were used that would affect bowel function

5- Page 4 line 7: The discussion should include an explanation for choosing to conduct an open-labelled trial and the challenges of doing this as an RCT, sources of Bias and how this would affect the results

Minor Essential revisions:

1- Page 4 line 8: You can’t call it IV general anesthesia if you used 1-2% of Sevoflurane for maintenance

2- Page 4 line 9-10: The author needs to clarify defining obstructive pulmonary disease by airway pressure> 25. Is it the baseline after intubation or preop. And I would suggest adding a reference for that number.

3- Page 5 line 25-28: please clarify the value of preloading group 2 with RL (can be done in the discussion)

4- Page 6 line 18: I think that both the need for pain relief which can be affecting bowel function and blood transfusions which can be a reflection of coagulopathy caused by HES should be counted for
Discretionary revisions:
1- Page 4 line 22: I think “Patients were NPO overnight or for X-hours” sounds like a more simple structure

I hope you find this as a helpful constructive feedback.
Best of luck with your publication

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**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