OPEN PEER REVIEW

Open Peer Review (OPR)

As a new feature for progressing towards transparency, we decided to open a new window for all of our editors as well as authors titled "**Open Peer Review**". We hope by this new facility, our reviewers will be more motivated and authors will be more satisfied with the review process. We believe that publishing our peer review reports could make a transparent and clear environment for all our efforts within a journal, but not all reviewers tend to publish their comments.

What is "Open Peer Review" process?

An "Open Peer Review" process is making the details of all review process (including reviewers, associate editors, and EICs comments) as "Public" as it is agreed by EIC, Authors, and reviewers.

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- More motivations for all involved roles in the review process
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- Education of both authors and new students
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You can find out more at:
https://sites.kowsarpub.com/kowsar/knowledgebase/category/tree.html#opr.html

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Peer Review Report for "Molecular Characterization and Diagnosis of Nosocomial *Clostridium difficile* Infection in Hospitalized Patients"

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Review Timeline:

Submit Date: 24 Aug 2019
Revised Date: 20 Mar 2020
Accepted Date: 22 Mar 2020

Revision (0)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (0) 27 Sep 2019

Dear AE,
I found the article well-written and based on properly designed research. However, the positive results are not large enough to have a statistical analysis on the accuracy of several methods. In the other hand, the authors must clarify the gold standard in this method to elucidate the analysis method of diagnostic yield.
Sincerely yours

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (0) 29 Dec 2019

Dear AE,
This manuscript describes the Molecular characterization of Clostridium difficile Infection in hospitalized patients. A combination of diagnostic tests, and comparison of selected methods were used for characterization. The key findings include the 3 pulsotypes (PF-A, PF-B, and PF-C). This paper adds to the knowledge of the molecular characterization of Clostridium difficile and can publish in this journal. One of the concerns that is the present manuscript was conducted three years ago and the data is not up-to-date. However, publication depends on the opinion of the Editor.

The paper has a number of issues that need to be addressed:
1. The title is not accurate and requires attention. Please remove ‘’comparative diagnosis’’ and correct title.
2. The abstract lacks detail of the study design and results and requires significant attention as it does not accurately reflect the study. I appreciate that space is limited in the abstract but a lot of the text could be removed or shortened to add some of this necessary detail.
3. The introduction is too long and it would benefit from a brief description of what is already known/published about Clostridium difficile in as well as some description of key data about prevalence and epidemiology from various regions of the world. This will help to set the scene and help a reader to appreciate the significance of the aims and study results.
4. Why did not you investigate the binary toxin?
5. Why did not you perform an antibiotic susceptibility test?
6. Conclusion is not according to the aim of your study. Do you investigate trends? This is a big claim and will not be achieved by doing this study. Please totally revise that.
Thanks.

Bita Pourkaveh: Associate Editor | **Revision** (0) 5 Jan 2020

Dear EIC,
The manuscript is studied, and there are some comments which should be addressed by the author. According to the comments, the document needs major revision.
Kind regards,

Masoud Mardani: EIC | **Revision** (0) 12 Jan 2020

Dear Author,
The reviewers' comments are mentioned. Please correct the details as mentioned above carefully according to reviewers' request.
Thanks.

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Revision (1)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Reviewers' Comments:

Reviewer 1:

Dear Editor

I found the article well-written and based on properly designed research. However, the positive results are not large enough to have a statistical analysis on the accuracy of several methods. In other hand, the authors must clarify the gold standard in this method to elucidate the analysis method of diagnostic yield.

Authors' response:

The sample size of study was determined based on hospitalized patients with diarrhea associated with the usage of antibiotics after hospitalization; moreover the *C. difficile* prevalence was low in our hospital. Although the cell culture is the gold standard of *C. difficile* diagnosis it is not practically use in clinical laboratories and the aim of our studies was to evaluate the common methods which are practically used.

Reviewer 2:

This manuscript describes the Molecular characterization of Clostridium difficile Infection in hospitalized patients. A combination of diagnostic tests, and comparison of selected methods were used for characterization. The key findings include the 3 pulsotypes (PF-A, PF-B, and PF-C). This paper adds to the knowledge of the molecular characterization of Clostridium difficile and can publish in this journal. One of the concerns that is the present manuscript was conducted three years ago and data is not up-to-date. However, publication depends on the opinion of the Editor.

The paper has a number of issues that need to be addressed:

1. The title is not accurate and requires attention. Please remove ‘’comparative diagnosis’’ and correct titile

Authors' response:

It has been corrected.

2. The abstract lacks detail of the study design and results and requires significant attention as it does not accurately reflect the study. I appreciate that space is limited in the abstract but a lot of the text could be removed or shortened to add some of this necessary detail.

Authors' response:

The whole abstract was rewritten.

3. The introduction is too long and it would benefit from a brief description of what is already known/published about Clostridium difficile in as well as some description of key data about prevalence and epidemiology from various regions of the world. This will help to set the scene and help a reader to appreciate the significance of the aims and study results.

Authors' response:

The extra information about CDI epidemiology were added and unnecessary parts deleted.

4. Why did not you investigate the binary toxin?

Authors' response:

The binary toxin as it has been reported in previous studies has not been funded on all toxigenic *C. difficile* strains. Since we tried not to lose any positive samples; decided to evaluate *cdt*A and *cdt*B simultaneously which are more common than binary toxin.

5. Why did not you perform antibiotic susceptibility test?

Authors' response:

The main aim of the study was to evaluate the most 2 common methods direct stool culture and rapid test for diagnosis of CDID in clinical laboratories. The genotyping was extra examination which had facility to do that.

6. Conclusion is not according to the aim of your study. Do you investigate trend? This is a big claim and will not be achieved by doing this study. Please totally revise that.

Authors' response:

The whole conclusion was revised.

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Revision (1)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: EIC | **Revision (1)** 22 Mar 2020

Dear Author,
The document is reviewed carefully by the reviewers. According to their comments and your revisions as requested, this manuscript is accepted.
Thanks.