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.

Advantages of "Open Peer Review" process

- More transparency, constructiveness and tactful comments of the peer review process: leads to an increase in the quality of reviews
- More motivations for all involved roles in the review process
- Authors' satisfactions from the review process: Increases honesty between authors and reviewers
- Education of both authors and new students
- Prevents reviewers from following their individual agendas and leading to the detection of reviewers' conflicts of interests

You can find out more at:
https://sites.kowsarpub.com/kowsar/knowledgebase/category/tree.html#opr.html

Hepatitis Monthly
Article DOI: 10.5812/hepatmon.116986
Published in: Hepatitis Monthly: 21(5); e116986

Peer Review Report for "Pre-Existing HBV and HCV Infections Do Not Affect COVID-19-Related Outcomes: An Observational Retrospective Study"

Author(s): Viola Guardigni, Elena Rosselli Del Turco, Lorenzo Badia, Silvia Galli, Kristian Scolz, Pierluigi Viale, Gabriella Verucchi

Review Timeline:

Submit Date:	18 Jun 2021
Revised Date:	2 Aug 2021
Accepted Date:	3 Aug 2021

Revision (0)

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

Heidar Sharafi: Associate Editor | **Revision** (0) 5 Jul 2021

Dear EIC,

I reviewed this manuscript and found the presented data interesting however, there are concerns should be carefully addressed by the authors.

Major comment:

The study participants were recruited from a hospital, means the cases with COVID-19 were selected with a bias toward more advanced disease. While this bias can majorly impact the results, the study results are valuable and can contribute to the literature. I would like to ask authors to add this bias as a limitation and remove the impression that the data and results came from the general population such as lines 153-156, "Considering the similar prevalence of viral hepatitis measured ...".

Minor comments:

1. The ethical statements should be added to manuscript body as well. More, was there any

participation consent in this study? it should be noted if the patients consented to participate or they the authors exempted it. Regarding the footnotes, these two can be merged "550/2020/Oss/AOUBo A link to an official webpage is not available, but further documents can be sent by email, if necessary." and "The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of S.Orsola-Malpighi Hospital, Bologna, Italy. All procedures complied with the provisions of the Helsinki Declaration."

2. Authors used term "viral hepatitis", "chronic viral hepatitis" or "viral liver infection". I believe these are confusing for readers considering that the evaluated markers of HBV and HCV. I suggest authors to use terms such as "HBV and HCV infections" or similar terms.

3. Abstract should be edited based on the instructions for preparation of brief reports: Abstracts must not exceed 200 words and should be a single paragraph with no subheadings.

4. For decimals, authors should use . (dot) instead of , (comma).

5. What was the criteria for SARS-CoV-2 clearance diagnosis?

6. Manuscript needs more details on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

7. Manuscript needs more details on statistical analysis such as the used statistical tests.

8. The sections Results and Discussion should be separated.

9. Line 118-121, "Factors associated with ICU ..." seems authors added some results from the COVID-19 population which are not necessary.

10. Lines 132-136, "Our study is the first that primarily aims ..." and lines 141-142, "Thus far, no previous report had investigated ...". Currently, I found the following articles and recommend authors to remove these statements:
- Yip TC, Wong VW, Lui GC, et al. Current and Past Infections of HBV Do Not Increase Mortality in Patients With COVID-19 [published online ahead of print, 2021 May 7]. Hepatology. 2021;10.1002/hep.31890. doi:10.1002/hep.31890
- Mangia A, Cenderello G, Verucchi G, et al. Is positivity for hepatitis C virus antibody predictive of lower risk of death in COVID-19 patients with cirrhosis?. World J Clin Cases. 2020;8(22):5831-5834. doi:10.12998/wjcc.v8.i22.5831

11. Authors stated that the 2% prevalence of HBsAg in participants is the similar to 0.5-1% prevalence in general population. While they are not significantly different, I cannot observe them as similar values.

Regards

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (**0**) 5 Jul 2021

Dear Authors,

Please follow the peer-review comments and submit a revision.

Regards,
EIC

OPEN PEER REVIEW

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.

Manuscript reference number: Hepat Mon | ID: 116986, Response to the Editor and Reviewers

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

We thank you for your evaluation and suggestion of resubmitting our manuscript for possible publication in Hepatitis Monthly, after revising it according the referees' comments.

The manuscript has been revised according to the all the comments of the reviewer, as specified in detail in the following response.

We thank the Reviewer for the constructive comments. We have produced a new version of the manuscript that we believe to address all the points raised in the peer review process.

Revisions, that we have made throughout the text, are described in the following point-by-point response.

Major comment:

The study participants were recruited from a hospital, means the cases with COVID-19 were selected with a bias toward more advanced disease. While this bias can majorly impact the results, the study results are valuable and can contribute to the literature. I would like to ask authors to add this bias as a limitation and remove the impression that the data and results came from the general population such as lines 153-156, "Considering the similar
prevalence of viral hepatitis measured ...".

- We thank the reviewer for this important consideration. We have now specified this selection bias among the study limitations and we have removed the impression that our findings could be generalized to a broader population.

Minor comments:

1. The ethical statements should be added to manuscript body as well. More, was there any participation consent in this study? it should be noted if the patients consented to participate or they the authors exempted it. Regarding the footnotes, these two can be merged "550/2020/Oss/AOUBo A link to an official webpage is not available, but
further documents can be sent by email, if necessary." and "The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of S.Orsola-Malpighi Hospital, Bologna, Italy. All procedures complied with the provisions of the Helsinki Declaration."

- According to the comments of the reviewer about the Ethical considerations, we have modified both the manuscript body and the footnotes. We have also specified that that the patients were exempted from giving their consent due to the COVID-19 emergency setting.

2. Authors used term "viral hepatitis", "chronic viral hepatitis" or "viral liver infection". I believe these are confusing for readers considering that the evaluated markers of HBV and HCV. I suggest authors to use terms such as "HBV and HCV infections" or similar terms.

- We agree with this comment. In particular, since we included also patients with HBsAg positive regardless from transaminases levels, we agreed that it is more appropriate avoiding the term

"hepatitis", preferring expressions like "HBV and HCV infections" or "chronic HBV and HCV infections" or "infections due to HBV or HCV". Therefore we modified these terms throughout the manuscript. Consistently with that we have modified the title in "Pre-existing HBV and HCV infections do not affect COVID-19-related outcomes: an observational retrospective study".

3. Abstract should be edited based on the instructions for preparation of brief reports: Abstracts must not exceed 200 words and should be a single paragraph with no subheadings.

- Abstract has been modified following the instructions for brief reports.

4. For decimals, authors should use . (dot) instead of , (comma).

- We have made the suggested corrections.

5. What was the criteria for SARS-CoV-2 clearance diagnosis?

- SARS-CoV-2 clearance was defined as at least two consecutive negative results for swabs collected 24 hours apart. We have added this important information in the Methods section.

6. Manuscript needs more details on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

- We added details on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

7. Manuscript needs more details on statistical analysis such as the used statistical tests.

- We have now added more details on the statistical analysis that we performed for the research.

8. The sections Results and Discussion should be separated.

- These two sections have been separated.

9. Line 118-121, "Factors associated with ICU ..." seems authors added some results from the COVID-19 population which are not necessary.

- We have removed this sentence.

10. Lines 132-136, "Our study is the first that primarily aims ..." and lines 141-142, "Thus far, no previous report had investigated ...". Currently, I found the following articles and recommend authors to remove these statements:
- Yip TC, Wong VW, Lui GC, et al. Current and Past Infections of HBV Do Not Increase Mortality in Patients With COVID-19 [published online ahead of print, 2021 May 7]. Hepatology. 2021;10.1002/hep.31890. doi:10.1002/hep.31890
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doi:10.12998/wjcc.v8.i22.5831

- We thanks the reviewer for rising this issue. Indeed, we agree that more clarity was necessary. We have removed the sentence at line 132-136 since it was confusing. We decided to maintain the sentence at lines 141-142 but added the reference, which was mentioned by the reviewer, of the paper by Mangia describing the prevalence of positivity for hepatitis C antibody. By doing this, we have better specified that no previous study evaluating the prevalence of patients with detectable HCV RNA have been published, while studies showing the prevalence of positive serology for HCV have been conducted (reported as reference 12 and 13).

11. Authors stated that the 2% prevalence of HBsAg in participants is the similar to 0.5-1% prevalence in general population. While they are not significantly different, I cannot observe them as similar values.

- We thank the reviewer for this very important comment. Indeed the prevalence of HBsAg and antibody for HCV positivity in our study sample is not similar to the general population, but slightly higher. Following this observation, we removed this inaccurate concept from the abstract and we modified the discussion by writing “slightly lower than those recorded in our study sample”.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

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

Heidar Sharafi: Associate Editor | **Revision** (1) 23 Jul 2021

Dear EIC,

Authors addressed most of the comments correctly. Before voting for publication, authors should take care of the following minor comments:

1. In previous comment 9, I asked authors to exclude the data from COVID-19 population (Lines 118-121). They excluded the first sentence and the second sentence was kept. I recommend to exclude the second one "Interestingly, albeit not significantly, women died ..." (Lines 110-113) as well.

2. Authors should use dot instead of comma for decimals in Figure 1.

Regards

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (1) 23 Jul 2021

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting the revision. Associate editor asked for more corrections.

Regards,
EIC

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

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.

Manuscript reference number: Hepat Mon | ID: 116986, Response to the Editor and Reviewers

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

We thank you for your evaluation and suggestion of resubmitting our manuscript for possible publication in Hepatitis Monthly, after revising it according the referees' comments.

We thank the Reviewer for these additional comments. We have produced a new version of the manuscript taking care of the Reviewer's minor comments.

Revisions, that we have made throughout the text, are described in the following point-by-point response.

1. In previous comment 9, I asked authors to exclude the data from COVID-19 population (Lines 118-121). They excluded the first sentence and the second sentence was kept. I recommend to exclude the second one "Interestingly, albeit not significantly, women died ..." (Lines 110-113) as well.

- We have now excluded also the second sentence that the Reviewer has correctly indicated

2. Authors should use dot instead of comma for decimals in Figure 1.

- Thank you for pointing this out. Commas have now been replaced by dots for decimals in Figure 1.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

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

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (2) 3 Aug 2021

Dear Authors,

I am delighted to inform that your manuscript is accepted for publication in Hepatitis Monthly.

Regards,
EIC