

statistical analysis

Statistical analyses were performed by using SPSS 17.0 (SPSS, Chicago, IL). HCV RNA levels were logarithmically transformed for further analysis. Continuous variables were expressed as either mean \pm standard deviation or as median and range. Frequencies were used for categorical variables. Quantitative variables were compared using the t test or the Mann-Whitney U test for variables according to different characteristics of distribution when necessary. Categorical data were compared using the Pearson χ^2 test or Fisher's exact test when necessary. $P < 0.05$ (two-tailed) was considered statistically significant.

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