

March 31st, 2021

Re: Manuscript No. 65475

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your letter and the possibility to submit our revised opinion review titled **Hepatitis E virus in professionally exposed: a reason for concern?** for publication in the World Journal of Hepatology.

We have carefully considered the reviewers' comments and have revised the manuscript accordingly. The changes are marked **in red** in the revised version of the manuscript. Please find below the answers to specific reviewers' comments.

Reviewer #1: This opinion piece has some interesting facts about the risk of acquiring HEV in those that are professionally exposed to the known animal reservoirs. There is certainly a need to improve our understanding of the epidemiology of this virus. While this manuscript is reasonably well-written there are some areas that should be re-phrased and/or clarified, and some grammatical corrections. I recommend revision before considering publication. See individual points below and track-changes in manuscript:

There were no line numbers to aid the reviewer.

We are aware of the inconvenience for the reviewer; however, the journal's prepositions do not require line numbering.

Abstract: Please define what is meant by the "One Health" approach

We have added the explanation in the abstract accordingly, Page 3.

Line 134: However, some studies found no differences in the HEV prevalence between workers at zoonotic risk and control groups – This statement seems out of context in this paragraph. The following statement, lines 135-138, needs re-phrasing.

We agree with the reviewer that the statement seems out of context, and we omitted it and re-phrased the paragraph, Page 7.

Line 160: India (75% vs. 10.71%), comment needed to here to clarify that the 10.71 % "general population" only drank filtered water and therefore results may be misleading.

Thank you for this suggestion. We have added the explanation, Page 7.

Line 170: prevalence ratio (PR) – needs to provide definition

We have added the explanation accordingly, Page 7.

The paragraph on protective equipment is contradictory and needs clarification. Authors should make a statement and then provide supporting or opposing evidence.

We agree with the reviewer's statement, and we have re-phrased the whole paragraph, Pages 7 and 8.

Authors should elaborate on the vaccine. What is available? Does it work? Etc

We added the paragraph about the vaccine as requested by the reviewer, Page 8

Lines 224 – 226: the evidence for use of gloves is confusing and contradictory. Perhaps the authors should state that "Despite conflicting evidence, the authors believe the use of personal protection minimises the risk of infection"

Thank you for this suggestion. We have added the statement accordingly, Page 9.

The first sentence of the conclusion needs to be re-phrased. Perhaps start with "Given the high seroprevalence...."

We have rephrased the sentence as suggested, Page 9.

End of conclusion - Authors use the term occupational disease – but it is not just occupational, so suggest deleting this last phrase.

We have rephrased the last sentence and hopefully improved the context. However, if requested, we are willing to omit it, Page 10.

Table 1: Authors should be consistent with the documentation of PR – sometimes it's in brackets and sometimes not.

We apologize for this mistake. We have corrected the data in the table and uniformly presented PRs, Page 19.

Reviewer #2: The manuscript entitled 'Hepatitis E virus in professionally exposed: a reason for concern?' is engaging. The authors clearly explained the HEV seroprevalence in different occupations in close contact with different animals that are reservoirs of HEV. As the authors mentioned, the HEV seroprevalence is high in pet owners; they could add that seroprevalence's numerical data. Though, this study's objective was not to show the HEV seroprevalence in pet owners.

Thank you for this remark. We have added the data regarding HEV seroprevalence in pet owners, paying attention not to divert focus from the occupational exposure, Page 6.

As the paper provides insight into the HEV seroprevalence in different occupational groups, it would be interesting to know which of the mentioned occupations (veterinarians, farmers, butchers, slaughterhouse

workers, forestry workers, hunters) have the highest HEV seroprevalence. I.E., which occupation has the highest risk of HEV infection.

Given the geographical diversity of the virus and all the factors which influence its seroprevalence (age, eating habits, religion, variations in sensitivity and/or specificity between different HEV antibody assays, immunological status, etc.), we are not able to rank the HEV seropositivity according to the profession in the current literature.

We corrected several typos and additionally revised the manuscript for grammar and language.

In conclusion, we thank the reviewers for recognizing the presented manuscript as a good effort and for the valuable and constructive comments, which made us think more critically about the presentation of our work.

We hope that we have improved the consistency, clarity, and interpretation of data in our manuscript and that the revised manuscript will meet the requirements and be suitable for publication in the World Journal of Hepatology.

Thank you again for the privilege of submitting our work to the World Journal of Hepatology.

Sincerely,

Anna Mrzljak, MD, PhD, FEBGH

Merkur University Hospital

School of Medicine, University of Zagreb

Zagreb, Croatia