

## ANSWERING REVIEWERS



February 12, 2014

Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the edited manuscript in Word format (file name: 8544-review.doc).

**Title:** Atrial fibrillation in patients with gastroesophageal reflux disease: a comprehensive review

**Author:** Crina Roman, Stanislas Bruley des Varannes, Lucian Muresan, Alina Picos, Dan L. Dumitrascu

**Name of Journal:** *World Journal of Gastroenterology*

**ESPS Manuscript NO:** 8544

The manuscript has been improved according to the suggestions of reviewers:

1 Format has been updated

2 Revision has been made according to the suggestions of the reviewer

### REVIEWER 1

**Reviewer 1: (1, 2)** The aim is different from the aim/objective in the abstract – correction needed.

**Author:** We agree. We modified the aim in the article so that it is now the same as the one stated in the abstract.

**Reviewer 1: (3.1)** The PubMed search regarding time: from – to, is missing.

**Author:** Thank you. We added the time period: from January 1972 (the time when the first relevant paper on this subject was found) to December 2013.

**Reviewer 1: (3.2)** Other databases could have been searched – ISI, Ovid, Embase, Cochrane etc, at least explain why such search not were done.

**Author:** We modified our search criteria according to the reviewer's advice. Embase, OvidSP, Embase, Cochrane and Wiley databases were also searched for relevant papers on this topic. We mentioned in the text the number of items found but the analyzed items were the same, thus not altering the content.

**Reviewer 1: (3.3)** There is no report of any statistics – why have not that been used, or what could have been appropriate to use.

**Author:** The identified studies show intense inhomogeneity regarding inclusion criteria, study type (e.g. retrospective/prospective), choice of statistical analysis method (Cox regression, Fisher exact test etc), and most importantly, the outcome of the trials (incidence of AF over time/ correlation between GERD and AF/ multivariate AF prediction model validation). Therefore neither fixed nor random effects' statistics could be performed. The systematic review structure is far beyond the purpose of the present study. With these data, we could only structure our work as a simple, non-systematic,

comprehensive review. The present article is a preliminary step for future systematic reviews and randomized trials.

This comment was included in the manuscript in the “limitations of the study” paragraph.

**Reviewer 1: (3.4)** The article is a systematic review of the aim – systematic reviews have strict criteria to be used – stick to them.

**Author:** Thank you for the comment. The reason for which the criteria of a systematic review were not strictly followed in our paper is because the article is a comprehensive review, not a systematic review. Indeed, a systematic review follows stricter editing rules, but this is not the case here. The reduced number of papers on this topic prevented us from elaborating a true systematic review.

**Reviewer 1: (4)** No numbers or tables have been reported under results

**Author:** Thank you for your suggestion. We included table 1 in the “Results” section.

**Reviewer 1: (5)** (Figure 2) Appropriate placement could also be under methods section

**Author:** Thank you. Indeed, figure 2 could have been placed under the “Methods” section, but, as the reviewer also suggested, it could be placed under the “Results” section as well. We preferred to keep it in the “Results” section.

**Reviewer 1: (6.1)** The following marked in yellow is part of a discussion.

**Author:** Thank you. The highlighted rows were moved to the “Discussion” section.

**Reviewer: (6.2)** There is no statement regarding the possibility or not of pooling results from the single studies reported.

**Author:** We did not pool together the singles studies because they have a great inhomogeneity, see 3.3. On the other hand, we found 10 reported single cases. We did not include case studies in our paper since it is known that the data collected from case reports are of no high scientific value and the conclusions drawn by them cannot be generalized to wider populations. A shortcoming of pooling the results from case reports is the bias in data collection, making it difficult to summarize the results into firm conclusions. Also, it is very difficult to establish a definite cause - effect relationship from case studies.

**Reviewer 1: (7)** The following in yellow is more like an introduction – it would be proper to move to the introduction section and shorten it.

**Author:** The highlighted rows were edited and moved to the “Introduction” section.

**Reviewer 1: (8)** The following would be appropriate to report in a table(s) under results, and thereafter discuss the different studies when it comes to the different parameters which are important.

**Author:** Thank you for this remark. In Table 1 we listed all the relevant articles on this topic. Table 1 was moved, as suggested, under the “Results” section. We discuss the relevant aspects in the “Discussion” section.

## REVIEWER 2

This is a review article on the association of GERD and AF based on the meta-analysis. The authors summarized the current status about their association. This is thought to give a good information to the readers.

Major comments: In comparison with the Discussion, the description of Introduction, Method, and Result are not proper. More supplement should be done.

**Author:** The Introduction, Method and Results sections were revised and modified.

**Reviewer 2:** Minor comments:

1. Some reference would be added.

**Author:** Thank you. We added the missing reference (no.13)

2. The term of esophagus and oesphagus is used confusedly. Please use the term "esophagus" instead of oesophagus.

**Author:** Thank you for your correction. We used esophagus throughout the manuscript.

3. Other trivial things should be marked in the attached file as red letters.

**Author:** Thank you. They were all corrected (see comments below).

**Reviewer 2: (1)** The introduction is not adequate. More additional background explanation for this review should be added.

**Author:** Thank you. The “Introduction” section was edited and improved according to this suggestion.

**Reviewer 2: (2)** “and so all of them”

**Author:** We corrected this in the manuscript.

**Reviewer 2: (3)** The statement “Did not meet first inclusion criteria” is not adequate according to the content of the main text. Please revise it.

**Author:** We agree. The underlined sentence was removed from the manuscript.

**Reviewer 2: (4)** Please add the reference.

**Author:** The reference was added as suggested.

## REVIEWER 3

Crina Roman et al. provide an interesting narrative review on the potential relationship between gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and the development of atrial fibrillation. The manuscript is concise and easy to read. Minor comments: In the Results section, the Authors state that 27 article were excluded because they did not contain both terms (atrial fibrillation and gastroesophageal reflux). Please clarify the issue.

**Author:** Thank you for your comment. This was clarified in figure no.2 (“Excluded on basis of title and abstract for clearly not being related to association AF and GERD n=1965”).

## REVIEWER 4

This article is a review of the literature about the controversial topic of the relationship between GERD and AF. Due to the scarcity of data, a meta-analysis would be difficult and a review is more than acceptable. However, I would mention in the title that the manuscript is a comprehensive review.

The paper is well written and the most relevant articles about the argument are well reported and analyzed. The references are updated. The conclusions are in agreement with the previous knowledge. Although you can ask about the real impact of the paper on GERD specialists, this manuscript is well summarizing what appears from the literature up to now especially for those who are not deeply committed to this issue.

**Author:** Thank you for your comments. The title was modified as suggested.

3 References and typesetting were corrected

Thank you again for publishing our manuscript in the *World Journal of Gastroenterology*.

Sincerely yours,



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