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Efficacy and Safety of the Novel Pegylated Interferon alfa-2a (Reiferon Retard®) in Egyptian Patients with Chronic Hepatitis C Genotype 4

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Rationale and background:
HCV genotype 4 is a common infection in Egypt and is the leading cause of liver disease. The aim of this work was to study the efficacy and safety of the novel 20-kD pegylated interferon alfa-2a derived from *Hansenula polymorpha* in combination with ribavirin in the treatment of Egyptian patients with chronic hepatitis C (CHC) genotype 4.

Patients and methods:
One hundred and seven patients with CHC genotype 4 were involved in this study. Liver biopsy was performed in all patients. All patients received fixed weekly dose of 160 µg of the novel pegylated interferon in combination with ribavirin in standard and adjusted doses. Serum HCV RNA was assessed by a real time sensitive PCR at 4,12, 48 and 72 weeks from the start of therapy. Early virological responders (EVR) completed a 48 week course of treatment.

Results:
Overall sustained virological response (SVR) was 60.7%. The SVR in patients with rapid virological response (RVR) was significantly higher (91.7%) than patients with complete EVR (67.74%) (p=0.033) and partial EVR (56.14%) (p=0.003). SVR was also higher significantly in patients with low degree of liver fibrosis by Metavir score (F1 & F2) (67.57%) compared to those with high degree (F3 & F4) (45.45%) (p=0.017). The baseline viral load had no impact on SVR in our series. No serious adverse events were reported in this study.

Conclusion:
The novel pegylated interferon alfa-2a studied is effective in the treatment of CHC genotype 4 patients and it is safe and well tolerated.