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EFFICACY AND SAFETY OF HANSENULA-DERIVED PEG-IFN α-2a 160 µg PLUS RIBAVIRIN IN CHRONIC HCV-GENOTYPE 4 EGYPTIAN PATIENTS

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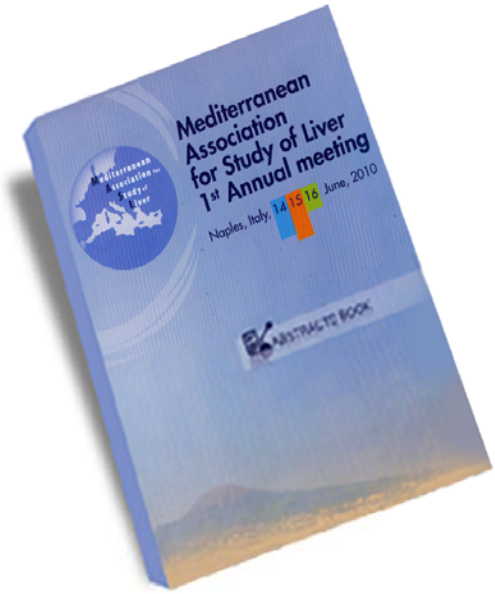

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Background:
Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is gaining increasing attention as a global health crisis. Egypt reports the highest prevalence of HCV worldwide, ranging from 6% to more than 40% among regions and demographic groups.

Study Aim:
To assess the efficacy and safety of the first Hansenula-derived PEG interferon alpha-2a (160 micrograms) combined with Ribavirin in chronic HCV Egyptian patients.

Patients and Methods:
An open label trial where 480 chronic hepatitis C patients were evaluated receiving a weekly fixed dose of 160 µg PEG-IFN alpha 2-a and Ribavirin in a dose of 11-13mg/kg/day. Patients underwent consistent clinical, biochemical, and virological evaluations during treatment. PCR was performed at 3, 12 and 18 months for follow-up.

Results:
The early virological overall response at 12 weeks was 80%. The end of treatment response was 75% (95% CI: 71.13-78.87%) at week 48, whereas the sustained virological response (SVR) was 60% (95% CI: 55.62-64.38%). Treatment is found to be tolerable and safe. None of the patients have stopped medications due to adverse events. Moreover the incidence of haematological adverse effects, known to be the most commonly encountered with combination therapy, did not warrant any dose modification.

Conclusion:
We document the efficacy and safety of the first Hansenula-derived PEG-IFN alpha 2-a (160 µg) in the treatment of HCV genotype 4 Egyptian patients.