**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Diagnosis of inflammatory bowel disease in chronic hepatitis C patients treated with pegylated interferon and ribavirin: Coincidence or consequence?

**Dear Sir,**

The adverse side effects of pegylated interferon and ribavirin (PegR) therapy include the exacerbation or induction of autoimmune diseases as a result of an increase in the T-helper 1/T-helper 2 (Th1/Th2) cell ratio. This immunological mechanism may explain the appearance of autoimmune diseases in an environment rich in Th1 responses, as it is the case of Crohn’s disease (CD). On the other hand, cessation of treatment leads to an augmentation of Th2 type responses, which may favour the development of Ulcerative Colitis (UC), a condition associated with predominant Th2 responses.1 Based on this, it has been reported to date that there are 13 cases of de-novo IBD following treatment with pegylated interferon and ribavirin.2–4

We report three clinical cases (see Table 1) of chronic hepatitis C patients (1 with genotype 1 and 2 with genotype 3), treated with PegR for 48 weeks (genotype 1) and 24 weeks (genotype 3), all with sustained virological response 6 months after the end of therapy.

The time between treatment and the development of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) symptoms in the reported cases suggest a relationship between the two events. The question arises whether the therapy PegR, especially in patients with a family history of IBD, may, through pathophysiological mechanisms described above, serve as a trigger for the onset of bowel disease.

**References**


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**Table 1** Clinical features of the 3 patients diagnosed with IBD after treatment with peginterferon and ribavirin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex; age</th>
<th>IBD type</th>
<th>Montreal classification</th>
<th>Time from PegR to IBD</th>
<th>IBD treatment</th>
<th>IBD family history</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M; 48</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>E2</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Mesalamine</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M; 39</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>A2 L2 B1 p</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Azathioprine</td>
<td>Mother with UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F; 51</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>A3 L1 B1</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Azathioprine</td>
<td>Son with CD</td>
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