

## **Pegylated Interferon in HCV Genotype 3 Relapser to Conventional Interferon in Pakistani Population**

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**Abstract :** Background: Estimated prevalence of Hepatitis C in Pakistan is 5% of which 78 % are Genotype 3, in which Response to conventional interferon is reported to be 70%. Objective: To determine the efficacy of pegylated interferon 20 kDa (Unipeg) plus ribavirin (Ribazole) in HCV genotype 3 patients who relapsed to conventional interferon. Methods: This is an ongoing study of 20 enrolled patients. Pegylated interferon alfa-2a 20 kDa 180 mcg weekly with ribavirin, were administered for a period of 24 weeks. Virological Responses were measured by Qualitative HCV RNA at weeks 4, 12, 24 and 48 to determine Rapid Virological Response (RVR), Early Virological Response (EVR), End of Treatment (ETR) and Sustained Virological Response (SVR), respectively. EVR was done for those who didn't achieve RVR. Results: Males were 12 (60%) and mean age was  $38.5 \pm 7.62$  years. Out of 20 recruited patients, all completed 4 weeks therapy; RVR was achieved in 8 (40%) patients. One patient was lost to follow up and one yet to visit at 12 weeks. From 10 patients, 8 (80%) patients achieved EVR. Out of intent-to-treat patients, 15 completed 24 weeks therapy, ETR was achieved in 14 (93%) patients and 9 patients completed post therapy follow-up, of which, 8 (89%) patients achieved SVR. Conclusion: Our interim data demonstrates that Pegylated Interferon alfa-2a 20 kDa 180 mcg (Unipeg) in combination with Ribavirin (Ribazole) has shown promising results in treating HCV Genotype 3 patients who relapsed to conventional interferon. We recommend use of Pegylated Interferon in Relapsers with Genotype 3 when financial constraints limit the use of oral antivirals.

**Keywords :** pegylated interferon (unipeg), hepatitis c, relapsers, Pakistan

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