Author's response to reviews

Title: Linear Echoendoscope-Guided ERCP for the Diagnosis of Occult Common Bile Duct Stones

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Attached is a revised copy of the paper entitled “Linear echoendoscope-guided ERCP for the diagnosis of occult common bile duct stones” by Hoi-Hung Chan, et al. We would like to submit this article for publication as an original article in this prominent journal.

The current study included 30 patients with biliary colic, pancreatitis, unexplained derangement of liver function tests, and/or dilated CBD for testing the role of linear EUS in identifying an occult CBD stones.

When a CBD stone was disclosed by linear EUS, ERCP with stone extraction was performed. Patients who failed ERCP were referred for surgical intervention. If no stone was found by EUS, ERCP would not be performed and patients were followed-up for possible biliary symptoms for up to three months. Of the 12 patients
who were positive for CBD stones by EUS, nine had successful ERCP, one failed ERCP (but was later treated successfully by surgical intervention) and two were false-positive cases. No procedure-related adverse events were noted. For those 18 patients without evidence of CBD stones by EUS, no false-negative case was noted during the three-month follow-up period. Linear EUS had sensitivity, specificity, positive and negative predicted values for the detection of CBD stones of 1, 0.9, 0.8 and 1, respectively. We conclude that linear EUS is safe and efficacious for the diagnosis of occult CBD stones in patients with intermediate risk for the disease. We hope that our findings can be helpful for clinical practice.

The listed Authors would like to express that 1) all participated actively in the study; 2) all have read and approved the submitted manuscript; 3) the study complies with current ethical considerations; 4) the manuscript reports an unpublished work which is not currently under consideration elsewhere and will not be submitted to another journal until a final decision has been made; and 5) there are no conflicts of interest, unless those identified specifically by the Authors in the letter.
A point-by-point response to the concerns

A. Dear Dr. Werner Hartwig (Referee 1),

Reviewer's report:

The authors adequately addressed the comments of the reviewer and changed the manuscript accordingly.

Thank you very much for your comment!

B. Dear Dr. Hjalmar van Santvoort (Referee 2),

Reviewer's report:

The authors have provided good answers to the points raised in my previous review. However, not all answers (especially when requesting additional data) have also been added in some form to the revised paper. Please go through your rebuttal once more and revise the paper accordingly, so the future reader will not have the same questions as I did.

Thank you for your reminder! We have revised the paper accordingly.

Quality of written English:

Needs some language corrections before being published.

Thank you for your valuable suggestion! We have made the language corrections.
C. Dear Dr. Martin Freeman (Referee 3),

Reviewer's report: Fine as is in the revised form.

Thank you very much!

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards!

Sincerely yours,

Hoi-Hung Chan, MD, PhD