Reviewer's report

Title: Meta-analysis: preoperative transcatheter arterial chemoembolization does not improve prognosis of patients with resectable hepatocellular carcinoma

Version: 1 Date: 13 January 2013

Reviewer: Susumu Eguchi

Reviewer's report:

This study is sufficiently interesting that includes information from 21 studies (3210 participants) for assessment the role of preoperative TACE for HCC. Also opinions and conclusions of many authors are still controversial, but as we can see results of this meta-analysis, there are no significantly differences in statistical data with TACE+ and TACE-. These kinds of meta-analyses are important for systematic review procedure and will make us looking for more standardized methods of reducing recurrence and improve prognosis for resectable HCC.

Major concerns
1. We have to ensure statistical validity of the study by statistical specialist.
2. Also the type of TACE should be sub-analyzed, such as whole liver TACE so-called chemolipiodolization or local TACE alone.
3. The information of background liver should be provided. Because the recurrence pattern of HCC includes two distinct types, 1. Multicentric occurrence, 2. Intrahepatic metastasis from main tumor. TACE may reduce type 2 recurrence but type 1 since type 1 recurrence occurs chronically in inflamed liver.

Minor concerns
1. The font of the letters was deranged in P5. It should be corrected.
2. Tables should be compact and written within one page otherwise it was difficult to read them.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.