Author's response to reviews

Title: Alpha-Fetoprotein Level as a Biomarker of Liver Fibrosis Status: A cross-sectional study of 619 consecutive patients with Chronic Hepatitis B

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Author's response to reviews:

To: Magdalena Morawska
Executive Editor
BMC Gastroenterology

RE: MS: 1479513560106106
Title: Alpha-Fetoprotein Level as a Biomarker of Liver Fibrosis Status in 619 consecutive patients with Chronic Hepatitis B

June 27, 2014

Dear Dr. Morawska:

Thank you for reviewing our previously revised manuscript entitled “Alpha-Fetoprotein Level as a Biomarker of Liver Fibrosis Status in 619 consecutive patients with Chronic Hepatitis B.” Notably, the title has revised as “Alpha-Fetoprotein Level as a Biomarker of Liver Fibrosis Status: A cross-sectional study of 619 consecutive patients with Chronic Hepatitis B.” We appreciate the reviewers’ comments and have modified our manuscript to incorporate the corrections and suggestions accordingly. You will find our point-by-point responses below.

We are grateful for this opportunity to revise our manuscript and resubmit it to BMC Gastroenterology for consideration of publication.

Sincerely yours,

Jing Dong, MD, PhD
Response to reviewers' comments:

Reviewer comment:
In the previous version of the manuscript the median values of AFP at liver inflammation stages null was 6.1 ng/ml which was higher than the values reported for the severe stages of inflammation. However in the table 3 of this new version the median value is 2.7 ng/ml. How the authors explain this difference?

Author response:
In the original manuscript we showed two groups, null and G1. However, when we revised the manuscript, we combined the null group (median 6.1) and the G1 group (median 2.7) into a single group. Therefore, in the current version that one group is G0-1 (median 2.7). This was addressed in our previous responses.

Reviewer comment:
The study has still some limitations, clearly stated in the discussion:
- mild accuracy in defined both inflammation and fibrosis by AFP (as defined by AUROC < 0.8);
- the use of the pathological staging system used in China, without comparison with others staging system;
- not dynamic measurements of AFP;

Author response:
As the reviewer noted, the points mentioned have already been addressed in the limitations paragraph of the Discussion.

Reviewer comment:
To increase the quality of the work it could be useful to compare AFP levels with APRI score for fibrosis.

Author response:
We agree that this would be useful and we have incorporated the APRI scores into the manuscript as advised. The results of APRI calculation (AST/PLT ratio) are now included in the Abstract and in the Results section of the main text.

Editorial comments:
Please include all authors' email addresses in the title page of your manuscript. Please also ensure that your revised manuscript conforms to the journal style.

Author response:
We have added the appropriate email addresses to the title page as advised. We have rechecked the entire manuscript to ensure that it conforms to the style described in the author guidelines. Corrections were made as needed.