Reviewer's report

Title: Serum hyaluronate as a non invasive marker of hepatic fibrosis and inflammation in chronic HBV infection

Version: 1 Date: 12 May 2005

Reviewer: Thierry Poynard

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. The most interesting group of patients are patients with HBV infection but without decompensated cirrhosis as in this group there is no need of fibrosis biomarkers. Therefore the primary endpoint should be the diagnosis of advanced fibrosis (including or not decompensated cirrhosis). The respective AUROCs should be performed excluding the control group without HBV infection. It is not clear from the AUROC data if he controls were excluded.
2. Table 4. Details of the number of subjects should be given, not only the percentages.
3. Quality of biopsies sample should be detailed: length, fragments, number of portal tracts.
4. Discordant cases between hyaluronate and biopsy should be discussed both from the risk of failure from hyaluronate and from biopsy sampling error.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract :
5. Delete reference to inflammation which not the primary endpoint for the diagnostic value of hyaluronate.
6. Modify the sentence giving an AUROC for a cut-off, as by definition the AUROC is calculated for all the values of a quantitative test.
7. References concerning Fibrotest-ActiTest-Fibrosure which is the most studied biomarkers are lacking particularly reference in HBV (Myers et al J Hepatol)
8. The definition of upper limit of normal should be defined due to the inter laboratory variability

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have a conflict of interest as I am the inventor of FibroTest and I have a capital interest in the startup company from Paris University marketing FibroTest.