Reviewer's report

Title: Blood ammonia levels in liver cirrhosis: a clue for the presence of esophageal varices.

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2008

Reviewer: Stephen Harrison

Reviewer's report:

Tarantino and colleagues present an interesting analysis of 201 cirrhotic patients and correlate blood ammonia level with the presence of esophageal varices (EV). While expert statistical analysis may be beneficial, these results do confirm a novel association between blood ammonia level & EV. While novel in their findings, these likely will not change clinical practice as all patients with cirrhosis undergo surveillance for EV, typically with an EGD. These authors propose empiric treatment for EV with beta-blockers if blood ammonia levels are elevated and that is certainly too much of a leap at this point. However, it would be interesting to see if putting pt's on beta blockers or performing EVL on their varices changed the ammonia level (an area of future study that might lead to blood ammonia level's utility in clinical practice).

No major revisions required.

Minor essential: some minor wording issues throughout likely related to english not being the primary language of the authors that could be easily corrected.

Overall, an interesting study that may lead to further study in the field relating ammonia level to EV.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.