Reviewer's report

**Title:** Clinical Research on Liver Reserve Function by 13C-Phenylalanine Breath Test in Elderly

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 19 January 2010

**Reviewer:** Marcello Candelli

**Reviewer's report:**

This is an interesting study on the efficacy of 13-C phenylalanine breath test (PBT) to evaluate liver function in elderly subjects. PBT has been evaluated in several studies on young and middle-age patients but data on elderly people are still lacking. This report clarify that age does not affect PBT results and may be an useful tool to investigate liver function in elderly people. These data are important because it has been demonstrated that the metabolism of other substrates used to evaluate liver function (such as 13C-methacetin) is affected by age.

The study was well written, methods and statistics are adequate and well described and discussion was supported by results.

**Minor essential revisions**

Only one point need to be discussed. The authors stated that PBT was not able to distinguish between Child B and Child C cirrhotic patients. However these data are inconclusive for the low number of Child C cirrhotic patients enrolled in the study.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests