Reviewer’s report

Title: Significance of a Reduction in HCV RNA Levels at 4 and 12 Weeks in Patients Infected with HCV Genotype 1b for the Prediction of the Outcome of Combination Therapy with Peginterferon and Ribavirin

Version: 1 Date: 31 August 2012

Reviewer: Akihito Tsubota

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Dr. Hidenori Toyoda and colleagues evaluated significant contribution of viral kinetics at 4 and 12 weeks of treatment to the prediction of achieving sustained virologic response (SVR) in pegylated interferon alpha-2b plus ribavirin combination therapy for Japanese patients infected with HCV genotype 1b. This manuscript has been well written. It arouses interest for readers and provides an important clue to treat chronic hepatitis C patients infected with HCV genotype 1b. The results in this manuscript were in agreement with those reported in previous literatures. However, readers might not understand novel vision obtained from this analysis. Authors should emphasize what were new findings more and more.

1) Discussion section, third paragraph: In this manuscript, there are some results that should be emphasized more and more by authors. Any on-treatment (viral decline magnitude at 4 and 12 weeks) and baseline variables (host and viral factors) did not predict the likelihood of achieving SVR in slow virologic responders, who were treated with the extended 72-week course. The findings may be original and unique. Prolonged treatment duration may relieve slow virologic responders from unfavorable conditions.

2) Method section: Where is (iii)?

3) What is reference 33? Authors should confirm reference numbers in the text and references list.

4) A soft package used for statistical analyses should be described in the revised text.

5) Statistical Analyses section: Were between-group differences analyzed by the chi-squared test alone? Really? How were quantitative variables analyzed to compare groups?

6) Authors should clarify how the best-cutoff values in the ROC curves were yielded.

Minor Essential Revisions
1) Paragraph prior to Statistical Analyses section, line 3 from the last line: “the GG genotype…”, instead of “The GG genotype”.

2) Results section, last paragraph, line 2 from the last line: “12 weeks (24 of 42…”, instead of “4 weeks (24 of 42…”.

Discretionary Revisions:
Figure 3 had better be removed from the revised text.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.