Reviewer's report

Title: A phase II open label trial evaluating safety and efficacy of a telomerase peptide vaccination in patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma

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Reviewer: Yo-ichi Yamashita

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Greten TF et al reported a phase II open label trial evaluating safety and efficacy of a telomerase peptide vaccination in patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). According to their report, low dose cyclophosphamide treatment followed by GM-CSF+GV1001 (a telomerase peptide) vaccinations did not show antitumor efficacy against advanced HCC. But, the study design is reasonable, and methods are adequate. Therefore, the informations gained from their "negative" report should be very important in its field. I consider that this report should be suitable for publication in BMC cancer after minor essential revisions as bellows.

1) The results of GV1001 specific T cell responses analyzed by cytokine secretion and/or proliferation analysis should be fully presented in "Results" section using Figures or Tables even though the responses are negative.

2) The treatment dose of GM-CSF and GV1001 should be clearly mentioned in "Patients and methods" section.

3) The authors demonstrated that a few patients respond to the DTH test or decrease of regulatory T cells by GM-CSF+GV1001 vaccinations. Are there any relationships between these immune responses and the clinical efficacy against advanced HCC of GM-CSF and GV1001 vaccinations?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.