Reviewer's report

Title: Promoter methylation of CDKN2A and the lack of p16 expression characterize patients with hepatocellular carcinoma

Version: 2 Date: 15 August 2009

Reviewer: Zonghai Li

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Minor Essential Revisions:
In this study, the authors demonstrated that the difference of CDKN2A-methylation and p16 protein expression between HCCs and liver metastases was statistically significant and claimed that the combined analysis of CDKN2A methylation and immunohistochemical staining for p16 expression might be an approach to distinguish HCC from non-HCC liver tumors and liver metastases. It seems interesting and the data are solid.

The authors also claim that there is no correlation between methylation of the first exon of the CDKN2A gene and nuclear expression of p16 (page 13, line 4). I think they had better add more discussion on this claim since protein expression should be correlated with the gene’s methylation status.

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.