Reviewer's report

Title: Retrospective comparison between a regular and a split-dose protocol of 5-fluorouracil, cisplatin, and mitoxantrone for the treatment of far advanced hepatocellular carcinoma

Version: 2 Date: 28 September 2010

Reviewer: mario budroni

Reviewer's report:

5-fluorouracil, cisplatin, and mitoxantrone for the treatment of far advanced hepatocellular carcinoma

Reviewer: Mario Budroni

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript addressed the effects and the side effects of a split-dose of FMP Chemotherapy in advanced hepatocellular carcinoma patients who had either main portal vein thrombosis and/or extrahepatic metastasis.

The authors replied satisfactorily to the many questions of Reviewers.

The first statistical problem that arises, is the patients selection. The group following the FMP with split-dose therapy is compared with two control groups, following treatment with a regular dose of FMP and a second group does not follow any treatment.

People must first meet the criteria of patients inclusion and exclusion. I think in this work the criteria are declared and respected for the three groups.

The statistical methods are well defined and properly used.

For small frequency of dichotomized variables, the Fisher's exact test is used; the t test for parametric data and the median for non-parametric data.

To assess the survival, Kaplan-Meier test was used; and log-rank test for comparison between groups. Independent predictive factors affecting survival were analyzed by the Cox multivariate proportional hazards regression model. These tests are usually used to assess survival and in this article are applied correctly and appropriately.

I have only two concerns but do not affect the validity of the article. The first is that younger patients have worse prognosis, usually in cases of cancer the opposite happens; the second is that the sample is very small and should thus have further confirmation.

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.'