Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical features and prognostic factors in patients with bone metastases from hepatocellular carcinoma after liver transplantation

Version: 2 Date: 6 August 2011

Reviewer: olivier scatton

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Dear Editor,

Overall, this is an interesting retrospective study with a clear clinical relevance. The readability is good but the manuscript should be shortened, especially the patients and methods section. Although this is a retrospective study, the number of patients seems appropriate to draw some conclusions. However, this study adds limited new data concerning the natural history and management of bones metastases following LT for HCC. I have some major comments on the messages delivered, and on major limitation of this study.

Major comments

1/ The Shangai criteria should be defined. This manuscript had no original or new data to the literature, especially concerning the risk factors of bone metastases. This major comment leads to the second one, concerning the histological analysis.

2/ A major comment is related to the predictors of survival after bone metastases. Histological analysis of the liver tumor is lacking. Some main prognostic factors have not been studied. However, neither microvascular invasion nor satellites has been depicted and analyzed as a risk factor for bone metastases. These factors are widely accepted to significantly impact the recurrence rate. Moreover, as it has been reported by Fukutomi et al in 2001, HCC bones metastases which were evaluated in 673 patients were mainly related to vascular invasion. These information should be provided and studied in the univariate and multivariate analysis. AFP is discussed in this manuscript while no impact has been found in this series. The authors should raiser discuss the role of circulating cells, bone marrow homing etc.. and then the impact of microvacular invasion.

Minor comments

- Table 2 could be deleted.
- The manuscript is to long

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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