Reviewer's report

Title: Atypical Presentation of Hepatocellular Carcinoma: A Mass on the Left Thoracic Wall

Version: 1 Date: 23 August 2004

Reviewer: David K Imagawa

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors present an interesting case report of hepatocellular carcinoma and chest wall metastasis. There is, however, some concern over the diagnostic and treatment strategy on this patient. Currently, most experts would agree that liver biopsy is not necessary to confirm the diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma. The authors fail to justify the need for a biopsy in this patient.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Describe the physical exam in terms of hepatomegaly, liver masses, splenomegaly and ascites.
2. More fully describe the CT report of the abdomen. Was there a clear mass or infiltrating lesion?
3. In discussion change "the etiology of HCC seems to be" to "the etiology of HCC was"
4. Change "AFP is frequently increased in HCC" to "AFP, when elevated"

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Give hepatitis B e antigen and viral DNA status, if available.
2. Was a bone scan performed? Were there any other sites of bony involvement?
3. The establishment of diagnosis of metastatic HCC is rarely problematic (discussion).

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None