Reviewer's report

Title: Systemic chemotherapy with doxorubicin, cisplatin and capecitabine for metastatic hepatocellular carcinoma

Version: 1 Date: 23 November 2005

Reviewer: Yehuda Z Patt

Reviewer's report:

The authors of this manuscript have conducted a well designed phase II trial of Doxorubicin, CDDP and Xeloda, in patients with Child-Pugh class A cirrhosis and HCC. They observed a 24% PR rate, (95% CI 9-40), with 6/29 patients with disease stability. The median time to progression was 3.7 months (95% CI 1.9-5.6) and median overall survival time was 7.7 months. Only one patient died due to a gastric variceal bleed not necessarily related to the treatment but may have been related to underlying liver disease.

Critique:

It would be very helpful to know whether the bleed that caused the patients death occurred when he/she had low platelets due to the chemotherapy or was unrelated.

Since the activity of single agent carcitabine in HCC was reported in Cancer 101: 578, 2004, it would be helpful to mention this reference and discuss whether the addition of doxorubicin and CDDP to capecitabine was considered helpful or not.

Safety: It is quite surprising that the investigators were able to use a capecitabine dose of 1000 mg/m2 BID x 14 days without a need for dose adjustment and hardly had any hand/foot syndrome. That should also be discussed in the discussion.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions