Reviewer's report

Title: The progressive elevation of alpha fetoprotein for the diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma in patients with liver cirrhosis

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Reviewer: Giuliano Ramadori

Reviewer's report:

General

This manuscript tries to convince the readership that three serial determinations of AFP-gene in level in patients with established liver cirrhosis may be helpful to detect hepatocellular carcinoma at an early time point. The authors suggest that a prospective study should be started. This study should be difficult to perform. In fact if we consider that ~5 % of patient with viral hepatitis and cirrhosis within a year develops HCC the number of patients with liver cirrhosis needed for the study would be quite large. However the manuscript draws the attention to the fact that continuous increase of AFP-serum concentration even a level which would not be considered of prognostic value for development of HCC should induce the start of investigations for HCC and eventually enrollment of the patient in a transplantation program even before the tumor becomes detectable.