Reviewer's report

Title: Thymostimulin in advanced hepatocellular carcinoma: a phase II trial

Version: 1 Date: 29 October 2007

Reviewer: Maurizio Chiriva-Internati

Reviewer's report:

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

Elegant study, but mortality at 11 months is 90%.

The authors should compare the data of this type of advanced cancer in patients with no treatment and other treatments to see what is the survival. They should discuss what is the expected survival without treatment.

Most of the time, patients die from liver failure. The authors stated that they have liver failure, so they should make a table regarding patient numbers with liver failure.

As some patients were treated with thymostimulin concomitant treatment with RFTA or TACE, this data should be added into table 3 so that we can compare the results to that of patients treated solely with thymostimulin.

Are there any other optional therapies to treat advanced HCC not suitable to resection, RFTA or TACE besides thymostimulin? How about the safety and side effects? This would be useful to support the discussion and conclusion.

In conclusion, the paper is elegant and well written but the benefits are not clear, given the fact that 90% of patients died within a year. What is the cost of these meds, and it is worth it for this little survival rate?

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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