Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Protein-Based Set of Reference Markers for Liver Tissues and Hepatocellular Carcinoma

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
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Melissa Norton, MD, Editor-in-Chief, BMC Cancer

RE: A Protein-Based Set of Reference Markers for Liver Tissues and Hepatocellular Carcinoma

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your consideration in our revised manuscript. As suggested by the reviewer, we have addressed his comments as follows.

We thank the reviewer for his thoughtful comments and constructive suggestions related to our manuscript. We have carefully examined his comments and revised the manuscript accordingly. We are confident that after incorporation of the additional information and other improvements (which are highlighted in the manuscript), the manuscript now meets the criteria for publishing in BMC Cancer.

Reviewer: Jeff Leek
Minor Essential Revisions:

1. We have rectified this in the manuscript and discuss where in appropriate that large p-value is a ranking tool only to identify potentially stable proteins and do not carry any measure in statistical significance. Further discussion on the mean, standard deviation and 95% CI was included to clarify low variability and close data distribution of the selected reference proteins intensities across the three comparison groups (cancerous, non-tumorous cirrhotic and normal) (Abstract, page 2, line 11; Result, page 5, line 7; Discussion, page 9, line 11; Materials and Methods, page 16, line 7; Figure Legends, page 22, line 9; Table 1 caption). The multiple comparisons of P values using student-t-test in Table 1 and Page 5 have been removed from the manuscript to avoid confusion.

2. Detailed description has been added in the text to explain the selection criteria were also based on the mean, standard deviation and 95% CI of the potential reference markers. Table 1 revealed the intensities distribution of the three potential candidates exhibited low expression variation in the tumourous, non-tumourous cirrhotic and normal liver tissues. Interpretation of the mean, standard deviation and 95% CI spread of each marker candidate was discussed in Results, Page 5 and line 13.

3. Combined groups (cancerous, non-tumorous cirrhotic, and normal) measure of the mean, standard deviation and 95% CI was added in Table 1 to further justify the potential use of the three selected reference markers with low variability. Results verified the reliability of the choice of selection and detailed statistics were showed in Table 1 (Result, page 5, line 19).
I hope the queries and concerns raised by the reviewer can be addressed. Thank you for your attention, and look forward to a favourable and constructive reply.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

John M Luk, Dr.Med.Sc