Author's response to reviews

Title: The prognostic value of combined TGF-beta1 and ELF in hepatocellular carcinoma

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Version: 3 Date: 4 February 2015

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors:

We appreciate you and two distinguished reviewers for your critical and insightful comments concerning our manuscript entitled “The prognostic value of combined TGF-beta1 and ELF in hepatocellular carcinoma” (MS: 7802759371504599). Your comments are valuable and helpful for revision and improvement of our manuscript. According to your comments, we have made the point-by-point correction carefully. We expect it can meet with the approval.

The responses to your comments are as listed as follows.

Editors comments

**Response:** we have deleted and revised the sentence in our conclusion: “our current study is the first to demonstrate that prognostic accuracy of testing can be enhanced by their combination”.

Reviewer 1

1. Major Compulsory Revisions

(1) Can the liver resection in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) patients with PVTT be thought as be curative? It is well-known that HCC with PVTT are so advanced.

**Response:** In 1984, Foster JH has published that the criteria of curative resection of primary liver cancer was complete removal of all gross tumors with no residual tumor at the excision margin. However, according to up-dated guidelines of HCC, the curative criteria should contain surgery factors and tumor factors, such as no extrahepatic metastasis, no hilar lymph node metastsis, no tumor thrombus in the main trunks and their primary tributaries of the portal vein, common hepatic duct, hepatic vein and vena cave inferior. So in order to publish the paper accurately, we think it is better to change the “curative resection” to “hepatic resection” in our manuscript, because the cases in our study contained some patients with macrovascular tumor thrombus.
In this study, only 84 cases were involved in the study from June 2007 to October 2009. Why are there so few cases recruited during 3 years?

Response: In this study, the operations of all 84 patients were done by the same doctor in order to avoid the surgery factors caused by different doctors.

(3) Does the author have any plans to assess patients in the future on a prospective basis or in a clinical trial looking at adjuvant therapies?

Response: Yes. we will plan to further study the mechanisms of ELF preventing from HCC in vivo and in vitro, then do the prospective study to assess whether ELF has the prognostic value and the prognostic accuracy can be enhanced by the combination between ELF and TGF-beta1. Finally, we plan to provide the patients with TGF-β-high and ELF-low expression the personalized therapies, such as TACE, chemotherapy and percutaneous ablation, observe whether these adjuvant therapies can improve the survival of high-risk patients.

2. Minor Essential Revisions A careful language editing is needed. There are several typos and grammatical errors.

Response: We have accepted your suggestion and made the whole revision carefully.

Thank you again.

Best regards

Yours Sincerely

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