Hepatocellular cancer (HCC) is one of the most common, aggressive malignancies, the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide. Although surgical resection, percutaneous ablation and liver transplantation are considered as the curative treatments for HCC, the long-term prognosis of patients undergoing potentially curative treatments is still poor. The transforming growth factor β (TGF-β) signaling pathway is known to play an important role in multiple cellular processes, including cell growth, differentiation, adhesion, migration, apoptosis, extracellular matrix formation and immunosuppressant. Embryonic Liver Fodrin (ELF), also named as β-spectrin (βSP), first isolated from foregut endodermal stem cell libraries, functions as a Smad3/4 adaptor protein, plays critical roles in the proper control of Smad access to activating receptors involved in regulation of TGF-β signaling.

This study found combined both TGF-β1 and ELF provided a more powerful predictor for HCC prognosis than either marker alone. Therefore, it might be new method to predict prognosis in patients with HCC, the study has potential clinical value.