Author’s response to reviews

Title: Intra-arterial ethanol embolization augments response to TACE for treatment of HCC with portal venous tumor thrombus

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Avo Artinyan (Reviewer 2): The author's have revised the manuscript and have addressed my criticisms. I think the study clearly has limitations, which the authors identify, but the results and conclusions are valid in my opinion. I have two very minor questions/suggestions.

1. Sorafenib statistics were not clear to me, the authors state "However, the median overall survival (OS) gain with sorafenib is 5.6 months..." Did sorafenib cause an increase in survival of 5.6 months? This seems unlikely to me, or was overall survival with sorafenib increased to a median of 5.5 months?

Reply: Thank you for your suggestion. There are many studies presenting different results. Among these studies, two of them should be highly focused. The first one is the SHARP trial [1]. Sub-analyses of SHARP trial identified 231 patients with PVTT and demonstrated that the sorafenib group (n = 108) achieved a median overall survival (OS) (8.1 mo vs 4.9 mo) as compared to the control group (n = 123) who received placebo. The second study is the AsiaPacific trial [2]. In the sub-group analyses of this trial, patients with PVTT and/or extrahepatic spread who received sorafenib (n = 118) showed a better clinical outcome than in placebo group (n = 61): median OS (5.6 mo vs 4.1 mo). In Asia, patients have a high rate of
HBV infection. Our study also included a high proportion of HBV infected patients. Hence, we adopted the results that came from the AsiaPacific trial. In our hospital, for these patients, they usually achieved OS within 3 to 4 mo by using sorafenib. But, we do not have strong statistical evidence.

2. The authors state that their study is the first to demonstrate that "this therapeutic approach is more effective than TACE…" With the limitations of the study, I would soften statements like these to something like, "this therapeutic approach may be more effective than TACE…"

Reply: Thank you for your kindly modification. Definitely, every sentence in a scientific report should be precise and desirable. We changed it throughout the manuscript.

Reference:
