Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 17 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Avo Artinyan

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The study by Yang et al. compared the efficacy of TACE+TED vs TACE alone in patients with HCC with portal vein tumor thrombus, a group of patients who are in general poor candidates for resection and transplantation. The study demonstrated a response and survival benefit for TACE+TED compared to TACE alone.

The manuscript in general was well written, well organized. The methodology was well-described, in particular the procedural details which will be useful to readers who wish to replicate the authors' technique. The interpretation and conclusions were mostly valid and appropriate for the results.

Specific criticisms and suggestions follow:

1. The study was not randomized and patients were allowed to select their procedure. The authors recognize this limitation and also point out that the TACE+TED group had more advanced tumors which make their results even more significant. However, the TACE+TED group had a significantly higher proportion of Childs A patients than the TACE alone group. We know that survival in these patients is related not only to the cancer but the underlying cirrhosis. I would ask the authors to provide a stratified analysis in only Childs A patients in addition to the results they have already provided.

2. The number of course of treatment did not appear to be standardized and patients in the TACE+TED group had more courses of treatment. We know from the TACE literature that there is some benefit to repeated TACE in HCC. I think this is a limitation that the authors should discuss.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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