Reviewer's report

Title: Herbal compound 861 prevents hepatic fibrosis by inhibiting the TGF-β1/Smad/SnoN pathway in bile duct-ligated rats

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Reviewer: Mona F Mahmoud

Reviewer's report:

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Title: Herbal compound 861 prevents hepatic fibrosis by inhibiting TGF-β1/Smad/SnoN pathway in Bile Duct-Ligated Rats

The authors investigated whether cpd 861 protects against BDL induced liver fibrosis and its involvement in the inhibition of TGF-β1/Smad/SnoN pathway in BDL rats, they found that cpd861 protects against BDL induced liver fibrosis by inhibiting TGF-β1/Smad/SnoN pathway BDL rats.

The study is well designed but there are some points:

1- The title contains 3 abbreviations; some of them are not common abbreviations and should be written in full words like smad and SnoN, besides several abbreviations in the paper should be written in full words for the first time before using them thereafter.

2- There are about 15 studies about cpd861 effect on liver such as Hou et al., 2016; Li et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2008; Ding et al., 2005 and others who investigated the hepatoprotective effect of cpd861 on liver disease, so the introduction needs revision to ensure logical flow of knowledge and mention similar studies and what is new in the present study.

3- In materials and methods section, give the full name of SPF grade.
There are several typographical errors throughout the manuscript that should be corrected and revised by native English speaker before considering the article for publication.

5- The dose of cpd861 is 9 g/kg /d and as the authors mentioned this dose is 10 times dosage recommended for a human adult, so the authors administered this very large dose.

6- Blood and tissue sampling should be mentioned in the methodology.

7- The authors stated in page 9, line 29& 30 " Evaluated by METAVIR system, the mean fibrosis score of the Cpd861 group was significantly lower than that of the BDL Group and sham operation group (Table 2)" I wonder was there any fibrosis in sham group?

8- The authors should the make spaces between numbers in mean and SD and P value.

9- It was observed in table 3 that cpd861 increased total and direct bilirubin more than BDL group when I referred to the discussion I did not find any explanation for this controversy in results.

10- In page 10 line 32 the authors compared the protective effect of cpd861 to sham group only however the most important is to compare with BDL group.

11- In discussion, the authors did not explain how SnoN protein is increased without any change in its mRNA.

12- Why the authors did not compare the effect of cpd861 on liver fibrosis by reference standard drug like silymarin?

13- The authors did not mention in results section the effect of cpd861 on phosphorylated smad.

14- Discussion section needs further revision.

15- It was observed that sham group in all figures has no SD, how it comes are the 6 rats in this group give the same value however the SD in other groups is high!!!!

16- The bands of western blot of p-smad 2 and 3 are not clear please provide more clear bands.

17- In discussion, the authors should avoid repletion of the results as in first paragraph of this discussion

18- In figure legends, the authors should provide the number of animals the type of data presentation and the statistical test used in their study.
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.
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Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I recommend additional statistical review

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