23 October 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your valuable comments. These have been addressed as follows:

* Patient selection: exclude delta positive patients, patients with undetectable HBV DNA at baseline and those receiving ETV as prophylaxis
  + These have been excluded and updated calculations have been performed. The number of patients for analysis is now 163 from 169
* Drop efficacy data at month 42, too few patients at risk but extend cumulative curves in figure 2 to month 36. Show patients at risk for each time point for each figure and add statistical significance. Use Kaplan Meier analysis
  + Efficacy data has been restricted to 36 months in the figures 2a and 2b
* Figure 1, methods and text: delete partial virological suppression data but show and discuss partial response defined as detectable HBV DNA at week 48. Show residual viremia t week 48 and describe follow-up of these patients.
  + PVS has been deleted from figure 1. PVS at week 48 is discussed in the results section
* Table 1: eliminate portal and lobular score data
  + These have been removed from manuscript
* HCC: show the rates of HCC among cirrhotics
  + The fibrosis score was not known in all patients that developed HCC. The following text has been added “2 patients with HCC had a pre-treatment biopsy which showed F2 for one and F3 for the other patient.”
* Treatment failures: 5 patients had a virological rebound and4 patients were changed to another agent. Show these patients in much more details. Any case of entecavir resistance ? How many of the patients with a virological rebound did so after achieving undetectable viremia. How was compliance in these patients ?
  + These patients have been elaborated on in the results section.
* Add HBeAg seroconversion and HBsAg loss rates
  + These have been added in the results section
* Drop figure 2c.
  + Figure 2c has been removed
* Figure 2b: the 30 month response rate among patients with baseline viremia above 8 logs is approximately 60% only. These findings need to be further discussed.
  + These findings have been explored in the Discussion section. The relevant text is “Amongst patients with baseline HBV DNA >108 the CVS was only 67.5% compared to 92% for patients with baseline HBV DNA < 104. This is most likely explained by the high proportion of eAg positive cases (82%) in the high baseline DNA group compared to the low baseline DNA group (10.5%).”

Kind regards

Dr Farzan Fahrtash Bahin