

Reviewer #1:

Dear reviewer, many thanks for your valuable comments.

1. There has no demonstration about the expression pattern of FGF-19 in other malignant cancers such as cholangiocarcinoma. It is important to further explain the application value of FGF-19 in HCC.

- A- This is beyond the scope of this study.

- B- We mentioned this point as study limitation on page 13.

2. The authors have no elucidate the difference and innovation of this study compared with other similar observations.

- The differences in results compared with other observations were mentioned in discussion section on pages 11-13.

3. What's the expression pattern of FGF-19 in different stage of HCC? It would be better to carry out a stratified research.

- Serum FGF-19 levels were compared according to HCC characteristics in table 3, which reflects its expression according to the grade of disease.

Reviewer #2:

Dear reviewer, many thanks for your valuable comments.

1. Sample size is small.

- We mentioned this point in study limitation on page 13.

2. HCC group includes a lot of C-P class B and C (83.4%), while cirrhotic group includes only 40%. So I concern that the higher level of FGF-19 in your study reflects just the degree of cirrhosis. Indeed, Table 4 shows that the FGF-19 levels are not different between the low tumor volume group and the high tumor volume group and PVT. It confuses me very much, and I guess FGF-19 is less useful for the monitoring HCC.

- A- We performed a statistical analysis for serum FGF-19 levels according to Child-Pugh class in both groups in table 2.

-B- We attributed the lack of statistical significance to the small sample size on page 11.

3. The percentage of advanced HCC seems to be very high in your study.

- We clarified that the patients were consecutively recruited on page 8 and mentioned this point in study limitations on page 13.

4. The definition of cirrhosis should be described in more detail in the Material & Methods section.

- We cited a reference for detailed cirrhosis description, we think that the mention of detailed cirrhosis diagnostic criteria is beyond the scope of the current study.

5. You should insert the underlying liver diseases (HBV/HCV/nonBnonC) and the alcoholic consumption into Table 1, and compare them between the groups.

- We inserted the detailed aetiology of liver disease in table 1.

6. I believe that the box plot is better than the bar plot to express the distributions of FGF-19 level in each group in Figure 1.

- We changed the chart type to box plot.

7. I want to know the FGF-19 levels of the HCC group after treatment. If possible, you mention them in the manuscript.

- This point is beyond the scope of the current study, we mentioned this point in the study limitations and perspectives.

Sincerely yours,

Ghada A Mohamed, MD, Lecturer of Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology and Hepatology Unit, Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University, Khalifa El-Maamon St., Abbassia, Cairo 11591, Egypt.  
[ghadaabdelrahman@med.asu.edu.eg](mailto:ghadaabdelrahman@med.asu.edu.eg) Telephone: +201225256260