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Name of journal: World Journal of Gastroenterology

Manuscript NO: 43054

Title: Safety of HBV core antigen-positive grafts in liver transplantation: A single-center experience in China

Dear editors,

Thank you for your letter and your comments and those of the reviewers are all highly insightful and very helpful for revising and improving our paper. We have revised the manuscript and updated the format. Additionally, revisions in the manuscript have been highlighted. We also added the part of "BACKGROUND" in Abstract according to science editor's suggestion.

In the following pages are our point-by-point responses to each of the comments of the reviewers.

We appreciate for Editors' and Reviewers' warm work earnestly, and hope that the revisions in the manuscript and our accompanying responses will be suitable for publication in this eminent journal.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Best wishes,

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Reviewer #1:

(Reviewer's code: 02529007)

Comments:

Manuscript NO: 43054 entitled, "Safety of HBV core antigen-positive grafts in liver transplantation: A single-center experience in China" is a retrospective study on 1071 successively transplanted patients in West China Hospital Liver Transplantation Center where 230 patients received HBcAb positive (HBcAb+) and 841 patients received HBcAb negative (HBcAb-) liver grafts during eleven years (from 2005 to 2016). The survival rates from, post-transplant complication rates and liver function recovery after surgery, in 1 to 5 years follow ups were similar for both groups of patients. Analyses indicated no risk factor for long-term survival in those receiving HBcAb+ liver grafts in both (HBsAg+ and HBsAg- patients. Considering the shortage of suitable liver grafts for liver transplantation, authors conclude that based on the obtained results in this study, utilization of HBcAb+ grafts is rational and feasible. Comments: There are a number of reported studies on the impact of graft survival in liver transplantation by Hepatitis B-core antibody positive donors with sometime controversial results when compared to HbcAb negatives. However, the present study might be somehow considerable due to high number of the included patients and conducting the study in a single center. Taken together the manuscript is well-organized and relatively well written, but it is unnecessarily long and boring and authors should summarize it thoroughly. In specific the discussion section, that is unnecessarily long and boring. It starts with a long background information which should be presented in summarized form in Introduction and just focus to compare the obtained results in the present study, one in each paragraph, with outcome of the previously reported studies. But there are a number of dispersed and unnecessary paragraphs that induce complexity in the aimed concepts.



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Response:

We appreciate the reviewer's encouraging comments and kind reminder.

First of all, we rewrote and added some background information in the Introduction section (.....*The survival rate of recipients with HBcAb+ donors was lower than that of recipients with anti-HBc negative donors in two US studies^[19,26] in 1997 and was confirmed in another investigation 5 years later^[18]. However, in a similar Spanish study, the differences in survival were not statistically significant (68% vs 76%, $p > 0.05$)^[27]. And a UNOS-based study conducted in 2009^[17] found that HBsAg- recipients receiving HBcAb+ liver grafts had a significantly worse unadjusted graft survival, but the difference disappeared in multivariable analysis.* page 6 lines 9-14) and we cut out of the repetitive background information in Discussion section as we **deleted** the **original** 2nd paragraph (*In 1997, two studies with relatively small patient numbers found lower survival time in HBcAb+ graft recipients^[19,26], which was confirmed in another investigation 5 years later^[18]. Prieto et al.^[27] conducted a similar study in 2001 but, in contrast, failed to demonstrate a significant difference in 4-year survival rates^[27]. A UNOS-based study with a wealth of data conducted in 2009^[17] found that HBsAg- recipients receiving HBcAb+ liver grafts had a significantly worse unadjusted graft survival, but the difference disappeared in multivariable analysis.* These sentences no longer exist in revised manuscript.).

Second, we **deleted** some unnecessary parts in Discussion section which were irrelevant to the aim of our manuscript. For example, the end of the 4th paragraph. (*Though in some studies, donor aging was suspected as a contributor to worse outcome^[20,40], multivariate analyses in our study and in others^[20,43] did not find a significant association. And there were no septuagenarian donors which was associated with higher risk of recipients' survival^[44] in our cohort.* These sentences no longer exist in revised manuscript)



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Reviewer #2:

(Reviewer's code: 02953994)

Comments :

Very interesting study about the safety of HBV core antigen-positive grafts in liver transplantation. The number of the included patients is high. In this aspect, this study is of great significance. The manuscript need to be edited. The discussion is long, should be shortten. Some minor language revision is required.

Response :

Thank you very much for your comments. We have cut out of the repetitive background information in Discussion section as we deleted the **original** 2nd paragraph. And we have deleted some unnecessary parts in Discussion section which were irrelevant to the aim of our manuscript. For example, the end of the 4th paragraph.

As for the language problems, we have thoroughly reviewed the manuscript and corrected the grammar and word usage errors. Additionally, we have employed a professional language editing company(Nature Research Editing Service, Certification Key: 7DC2-0DB7-2E62-799C-18FF), to further polish the language in our manuscript to meet the requirements and standards of the journal.

Reviewer #3:

(Reviewer's code: 02953931)

Comments :

Very interesting study. I have no sepcific comments.

Response:

We thank the reviewer for this kind comment.



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Reviewer #4:

(Reviewer's code: 02953927)

Comments :

In this retrospective study, 1071 patients consecutively transplanted from 2005 to 2016 were enrolled. The safety of using HBV core antibody-positive donors for liver transplantation was evaluated. The outcomes of all recipients were reviewed. Newly diagnosed HBV infection had a relatively higher incidence in HBsAg- patients with HBcAb+ liver grafts, in which HBV naïve recipients suffered most, though this difference did not affect patient and graft survival. The patients number of this study is big, and the methods are logical. The results are informative and well discussed. However, the discussion seems long. The authors can shorten it and make it more focus on the subject of the study.

Response:

Thank you for your praise for our work. We have now shortened the discussion according to the suggestion. For example, we have cut out of the repetitive background information in Discussion section as we deleted the **original** 2nd paragraph. And we have deleted some unnecessary parts in Discussion section which were irrelevant to the aim of our manuscript.

Thanks again for the worm work earnestly of editors and reviewers.