To the Editor:

In the September issue of *Blood* (74:1235), Drs Nakao, Lai, and Young report on the effect of dengue virus on the growth of normal human bone marrow progenitor cells in vitro. The virus, a member of the flavivirus family, does not appear to affect the absolute number of erythroid BFU-E, but alters the proliferative capacity of this progenitor giving rise to colonies that are smaller in size. In their discussion, the investigators speculate that hepatitis C virus, believed
to be a flavivirus, may similarly exert a negative effect on bone marrow development and, thereby, explain the anemia observed in patients with non-A non-B hepatitis.

In a report entitled "Inhibition of Human Hemopoiesis by Non-A, Non-B Hepatitis Virus" (J Med Virol 27:34, 1989), we demonstrated that acute phase sera of primates infected with HCV suppressed the in vitro growth of normal human erythroid and granulocyte-macrophage colony formation. Sera isolated before the acute phase or in the recovery phase had no effect on colony formation. Furthermore, recent studies demonstrate that sera obtained from patients with HCV can suppress human bone marrow growth (manuscript in preparation). In a clinical trial examining the efficacy of alpha-interferon, the sera of HCV patients who responded to interferon therapy no longer inhibited colony formation, while the sera of patients who were nonresponders continued to suppress in vitro bone marrow growth.

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