

The mechanisms of blood coagulation and fibrinolysis have been evaluated in 28 black adult Africans with primary hepato-cellular carcinoma (HCC). A characteristic pattern of abnormalities has been defined. Dysbrinogenemia appears to be a useful biological marker for the disease. The reptilase test (RT) is a simple, reliable and sensitive means of detection of this metabolic abnormality. It is suggested that the RT should be used to screen populations at high risk of developing HCC, such as cirrhotics, in conjunction with α fetoprotein determinations, which, alone, are inadequate for the purpose. The haemostatic defect may have relevance to the patho-genesis of HCC, and further suggests a potentially useful, additional, therapeutic modality.