WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A liver stem cell comprising the following characteristics:

(i) expresses the protein markers SOX9, HNF4α, HNF3β, FOXA3, FOXQ1 and EPCAM;

(ii) expresses levels of KRT19 protein at least 2-fold greater but not more than 5-fold greater than background expression or expression by a negative control,

(iii) does not express detectable protein levels of KRT7 and AFP; and

(iv) does not have a polarized cell phenotype.

2. The liver stem cell of claim 1, that further expresses 1, 2, or 3 protein markers selected from CD24, PROM1, FOXA3, FOXQ1 and ECAD.

3. The liver stem cell of claim 1, wherein the characteristics of the stem cell are maintained in long-term culture, and comprise a normal karyotype after 19 passages in culture.

4. The liver stem cell of claims 1 to 3, wherein the liver stem cell is a mammalian liver stem cell.

5. The liver stem cell of claim 4, wherein the liver stem cell is a human liver stem cell.

6. The liver stem cell of claim 4, wherein the liver stem cell is a mouse liver stem cell.

7. The liver stem cell of claim 4, wherein the liver stem cell is a fetal liver stem cell.

8. The liver stem cell of claims 1 to 3, wherein the liver stem cell is isolated from a healthy subject.

9. The liver stem cell of claims 1 to 3, wherein the liver stem cell is isolated from a subject with liver disease, wherein the liver disease is selected from the group of metabolic disease, autoimmune disease, infectious disease, drug induced acute and chronic liver failure, and liver cancer.

10. Use of a liver stem cell of any one of claims 1 to 8 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating a liver disease, wherein the liver stem cell is to be transplanted into the liver of the subject, and wherein the transplanted cell is to repopulate the liver of the subject to treat the liver disease.

11. The use of claim 10, wherein the liver disease is selected from the group of metabolic disease, autoimmune disease, infectious disease, drug induced acute and chronic liver failure, and liver cancer.