Reviewer’s report

Title: Tryptophan degradation in Irritable Bowel Syndrome: Evidence of indoleamine 2,3-dioxygenase activation in a male cohort.

Version: 1 Date: 14 July 2008

Reviewer: Sylvie Bradesi

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

In this study, the plasma levels of tryptophan and its metabolites were assessed in a male IBS cohort (n=10) and healthy controls. Results indicate increased levels of kynurenine and neopterin and decreased levels of kynurenic acid in IBS patients compared with controls. These data are preliminary observations for the study of the altered tryptophan metabolism in IBS. The limited data and limitations of the study are clearly stated.

In the discussion, it is stated that plasma kynurenine levels and kynurenine/tryptophan ratio are higher in IBS patients "providing compelling evidence of increased tryptophan breakdown". This statement is in contrast with the actual data showing that tryptophan levels are not altered in IBS patients. Although, it is briefly discussed later in the discussion, conclusions should be consistent throughout the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions

the nature of the samples whould be indicated in the abstract

Discretionary Revisions

The authors indicate that interferon gama levels could not be reported because they were below the limit of quantitation of the analysis method. Could a different analysis method be used to assess the current samples for interferon gamma?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests