Author's response to reviews

Title: Epidemiological evaluation of concordance between initial diagnosis and central pathology review in a comprehensive and prospective series of sarcoma patients in the Rhone-Alpes region

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Miss Colette Homan,

Our manuscript entitled: "Epidemiological evaluation of concordance between initial diagnosis and central pathology review in a comprehensive and prospective series of sarcoma patients in the Rhone-Alpes region" by Antoine Lurkin et al. has been revised according to the comments of the reviewers. I apologize for the late response. Our answers are as follows:

Reviewer 1:
The authors should give some more information about the reviewing pathologists. Are they professions in the field of soft tissue sarcomas? Which molecular techniques do they use? Who selected these experts? Was there a third opinion necessary to find exact diagnosis?

Comment 1: This point has been developed in the parts d) Study design page 5

“The goal of this study was to compare initial histological evaluation by the diagnostic pathologist (generally not an expert on these diseases) and results of the central expert review (CER) by two regional and national exclusively soft tissue experts. These two experts, members of the French Sarcoma Group (FSG), were selected by the EMS project scientific committee. All pathologists working in the region agreed to cooperate. All suspected cases of sarcoma (soft tissue, bone and visceral tissue sarcoma; n=671) diagnosed during the reference period were collected.

Comment 2: This point has been developed in the parts f) Main outcome measure page 6

“The two experts evaluated in same time the diagnosis.”

“To define this score, the two experts must conclude to the same diagnose. In some rare cases and when the two experts did not have the same conclusion or if the diagnose was difficult the diagnosis was reexamined either by another expert (international expert Pr Fletcher) or discussed at monthly FSG pathologist meetings and a final consensus was determinated.”
Comment 3: Concerning the molecular techniques used this point has been developed in the f. Main outcome measure part and RESULTS page 7 and 9:

“For all sarcoma types with mutation, a molecular biology was systematically assessed (FISH technic, PCR or DNA sequencing) to characterize the genetic alteration and confirm the diagnose. The Immunomarques were systematically done again by the expert “

“of tumor sample, type of laboratory and molecular biology examination (yes vs. no) (Table 2). The molecular biology techniques used were the Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH), the PCR and DNA sequencing.”

Reviewer 2: It is not stated how many experts were included in the expert panel. Are some of the specimens evaluated by more than one expert and if so, have a consensus between experts been achieved?

Comment 1: This point has been developed in the parts d) Study design page 5

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This modified version of the manuscript has taken into account all the reviewers’ recommendations. We hope that this new version can be found acceptable for publication in BMC Cancer.

Thank you for the attention you will pay to our work.

Sincerely.

A Lurkin Ph D