Reviewer's report

Title: Differential survival following trastuzumab treatment based on quantitative HER2 expression and HER2 homodimers in a clinic-based cohort of patients with metastatic breast cancer.

Version: 2 Date: 8 September 2009

Reviewer: Shaheenah Dawood

Reviewer's report:

The authors have answered the questions posed adequately. I have a few comments from the updated information provided that need to be addressed:

1) first it is important that the a summary of patient and tumor characteristics be inserted at the beginning of the results section. As placed presently it appears out of place.

2) according to table 1 41 patients did not receive any chemo prior to trastuzumab and number of lines of prior treatment was unavailable for 12 patients. This contradicts the eligibility criteria of the study which states that women had to have received at least one chemotherapy regimen prior to receiving trastuzumab. This should be clarified.

3) According the methods section IHC was performed at the local treating institutions. However there are two rows in Table 1. The first shows patients with HER2 2+ and 3+ numbers and the second shows the full panel of patients with 0 / 1+/2+/3+. The numbers of the two rows do not tally. Was IHC repeated? Is that why the results are not the same. It appears so and should be stated clearly in the methods section.

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'