Reviewer’s report

Title: The PstI/RsaI and DraI polymorphisms of CYP2E1 and head & neck cancer risk: a meta-analysis based on 21 case-control studies

Version: 1 Date: 7 February 2010

Reviewer: Volker Harth

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General Comments:
In the present publication, Tang and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis of case-control studies on the role of CYP2E1 gene polymorphisms in association of ethnicity, smoking and alcohol with HNSCC. The meta-analysis is based on 21 eligible case-control studies.

To date, some studies have examined the interaction of these polymorphisms with HNSCC. Nevertheless, we have to deal with a large number of putative pathways, genes and sequence variations in the metabolism of carcinogenic agents. A single common gene variant is rarely sufficient to explain a complex disease. However, the hypothesis that variations in genes coding for metabolic enzymes determine an individual susceptibility to an exogenous exposure still is basically correct.

This is the first meta-analysis dealing with the association between CYP2E1 polymorphisms and head neck cancer. The specified inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as the statistical methods were clearly described. The limitations of the summary and a possible publication bias were extensively discussed.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. Further editing for grammar and style is necessary
2. PstI/RsaI, DraI and HNSCC have to be revised for consistent notation throughout the manuscript.
3. The titles of figures have to be revised (e.g. Fig. 1: Forest plot of LUNG cancer risk ..... The diamond represents the overall summary estimate, WITH CI REPRESENTED BY ITS WIDTH).

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.