Reviewer's report

Title: Circulating endothelial cells are an early predictor of tumor response in renal cell carcinoma patients treated with sunitinib

Version: 3 Date: 10 September 2009

Reviewer: Glen Kristiansen

Reviewer's report:

To my knowledge this study is the second report on the role of circulating endothelial cells (CEC) in renal cancer patients receiving sunitinib treatment. Although the study cohort has more a pilot study size (26 patients, most of these second line treated), the authors come up with interesting results that may become clinically relevant. Main finding is that the number of CEC increases significantly during the first course of therapy in patients responding to sunitib, whereas non-responders show no increase at all. This is encouraging and ought to be validated in further studies, since biomarkers of response to novel therapy approaches are urgently needed. The paper is well written, the results clearly presented and I have little to object.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

None.

- Minor Essential Revisions

Figure legends. It is a bit confusing, that the Figure legend refers to a total of five Figures (1, 2A/B, 3A/B) although seven Figures are attached to this paper.

Language. I am not a native speaker, but the last sentence of the Background section does not make sense to me. Biomarker(s)... are in desperate need? See also in the fourth sentence of the Discussion. These biomarkers are desperately needed, but not in desperate need, are they?

- Discretionary Revisions

None.

What next?

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Based on your assessment of the validity of the manuscript, what do you advise should be the next step?

- Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to make) sound studies including sound negative studies)
Level of interest
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- An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review
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Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician?
- No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests
I declare that I have no competing interests.