Reviewer's report

**Title:** Role of the VEGF ligand to receptor ratio in the progression of mismatch repair-proficient colorectal cancer

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 11 May 2009

**Reviewer:** Steven Hochwald

**Reviewer's report:**

Major compulsory revisions

This report is a large IHC study of mismatch repair proficient colorectal cancer. VEGFR-3 staining was performed with antibody from Chemicon. This is the 9D9F9 antibody. According to a recent report and review from an expert in the field (Alitalo K et al, Cancer Cell 13, 554-556, 2008) this antibody has been reported to stain blood and/or lymphatic vessels but not tumor cells in 90% of publications. The authors report staining of VEGFR-3 in tumor cells, not vessels in this study. This is likely not correct and these slides should be reviewed again and staining in tumor cells vs vessels should be reported and presented. In addition, in Figure 2 the % of positive cells are shown. However, there is no error bars and it is not clear what is significantly different amongst the groups. This needs to be clarified and error bars added. Finally, the authors show a univariate survival curve that demonstrates a significant difference in survival between low VEGF-A/VEGFR-1 and high VEGF-A/VEGFR1. They state that this difference in survival remained with multivariate analysis. The authors need to show what variables went into univariate and multivariate Cox proportional hazards model. They need to show the p-values for the appropriate variables including T stage, N stage, vascular invasion on univariate and multivariate analysis.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.