Author's response to reviews

Title: Mesenchymal and stemness circulating tumor cells in early breast cancer diagnosis

Authors:

  guislaine barriere (guislainebarriere@yahoo.fr)
  alain riouallon (riouallon@clinique-colombier.fr)
  joel renaudie (renjo@clinique-colombier.fr)
  michel tartary (michel.tartary@numericable.com)
  Prof rigaud michel (rigaud.michel@yahoo.fr)

Version: 4 Date: 5 January 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
To Sabine Kasimir-Bauer

1. The abstract has been rewritten and restructured with a clear outline.
2. Figure 2 has been excluded.
3. Statistics are given in Table 2 with $P$ values.
4. We corrected grammar and spelling mistakes and the new copy was read by a scientific native English.

To Lisa Ryden

1. We have clarified the definition of CTC and particularly we named ddCTC only circulating tumor cells having mesenchymal and/or stemness characteristics.
2. To realize analysis of ddCTC 7 ml of blood are enough for EMT and stemness characterization. When we did basic AdnaGen test, we took 7 ml again, not due to the quantity of material but because the enrichment method is quite different.
3. One patient upon 61 has been cited in our previous copy. We suppress this information as it is a part of an other paper we are writing about 400 patients included in a second protocol. In this latter we found 8% of positive patients according the basic AdnaGen kit. This result is not so far from those of the literature: Banys et al. we have cited in our bibliography [ref 17], using basic AdnaGen test found 12% of positive patients upon about 209. They studied primary breast cancer as we did and not metastatic breast cancer as the majority of papers on CTC did.
4. We added in the revised version Her-2 status and Ki67 index. It seems us but we are not sure of what you mean about a proxy marker that would have strengthen the finding of EMT markers in specific subclasses. There are still many controversies about Ki67 to characterize luminal A, B, TN and Her-2 overexpressed.
5. The statistical section has been improved by adding $P$ values. As Khi2 is not always suitable we added values of Barnet Woolf test. However as the size of the samples is rather small we cannot conclude as far as the significance level for the relationship between ddCTC and node status is borderline.
6. Our paper was read and corrected by a scientific native English and we hope that the manuscript is now really acceptable.