Reviewer's report

**Title:** Prognostic relevance of mRNA levels of OPN splice variants in soft tissue sarcoma patients

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 3 January 2012

**Reviewer:** Franz Rödel

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Consequently continuing preceding analysis, Hahnel et al. analyzed the prognostic impact of three Osteopontin (OPN) splice variants in 124 patients with soft tissue sarcoma by quantitative real-time PCR. In their study, mRNA expression levels of OPN splice variants a, b and c are significantly associated with poor prognosis, highly prominent in women with an elevated risk of tumor-related death. Moreover, the authors indicated that high mRNA expression levels of OPN-b and OPN-c correlated with an elevated risk of tumor-related death in patients treated with curative radiotherapy. Thus they concluded that elevated mRNA expression levels of OPN splice variants are negative prognostic and predictive markers for soft tissue sarcoma patients.

In summary, this is a well performed and interesting study on the relevance of a molecular biomarker in soft tissue sarcoma. Overall the paper is well written using an appropriate methodology on a sufficient number of patients. The data are described and discussed in a convincing manner. There are, however, same compulsory revisions as mentioned successive to be addressed.

**Major compulsory revisions:**

1.) In their analysis, the authors compared mRNA-expression levels of the OPN splice variants in tumor of individual patients and in surrounding tissue. However, they did not address the ratio of splice variants to wild type (wt) OPN. Is there a more prominent expression of wt OPN as compared to splice variants? This correlation may be easily done with preceding data (Bache et al. BMC Cancer 2010) or should at least be performed in the corresponding tumor/mucosa pairs reported within this study.

**Minor essential revisions:**

2.) Figure1: to improve readability of the Figure, corresponding p-values should be included in the graphs and y-axis should be labeled with “Disease-specific survival”.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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