Reviewer’s report

Title: Fascin overexpression promotes neoplastic progression in OSCC.

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Reviewer: Monther Al-Alwan

Reviewer’s report:

Fascin has been reported to correlate with aggressiveness and metastasis of various types of cancer, while the exact role of fascin in this process remains to be elucidated. In this manuscript, authors presented in vitro data supporting a role for fascin in OSCC invasion and metastasis as well as an in vivo data showing clinical significance of fascin in OSCC progression. This manuscript presented interesting and valuable results, and applied rational approaches. However, some concerns should be addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1- The author generated 2 stable clones and showed fascin overexpression by WB (Figure 1A). It was shown that there was less fascin overexpression in clone 2 than in clone 1, yet clone 2 showed more invasion and adhesion. Is fascin expression in clone 2 always lower than clone 1? If so, the author showed discuss the relationship between fascin expression in these clone and the observed function.

2- In figure 3B, I see decrease levels of #6-intigrin, #4-intigrin and FAK in AW-fascin-1. The #-actin is saturated, so it is hard to judge whether this is a loading problem. Is this decrease reproducible?

3- The association between fascin overexpression and decreased E-cadherin levels (Figure 3F) is interesting and demonstrate that it may be involved in EMT as suggested by authors. However, other EMT markers (slug, snail, vimentin) were not change at the mRNA levels. Since the author concluded fascin regulation of tumor progression is not the consequence of EMT in OSCC, they should examine these markers at the protein levels to make that conclusion as this regulation may occur at the protein level. They also showed reduced #-catenin levels, but the rational for its use has not been discussed.

4- Page 11 line 12 (Figure S2A), if larger size image available it should be presented to clearly show the localization of fascin in the cell membrane and cytoplasm.

5- I suggest that the last section “Correlation of combined expression of fascin, K8 and 4-intigrin with clinicopathological parameters of the patients” to be summarized and merged with the previous section “Correlation of fascin expression with clinico-pathological parameters of the patients”. As this building on your previous finding (J Cell Sci) and is not the main finding of the paper.

6- Page 16 last paragraph starting at line 20, the first 6 lines were written like
results. This should be edited as discussion and not results.

Minor Compulsory Revisions:
1- OSCC should be spilled out in the title as “Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma”
2- Page 2 last sentence in the results under Abstract “Fascin expression in OSCC showed statistically significant correlation with tumor stage (P=0.041), lymph node metastasis (P=0.001), differentiation (P=0.005), recurrence (P=0.038) and survival (P=0.004) of the patients.” Should be clarified into “Fascin expression in OSCC showed statistically significant correlation with increased tumor stage (P=0.041), increased lymph node metastasis (P=0.001), less differentiation (P=0.005), increased recurrence (P=0.038) and shorter survival (P=0.004) of the patients.”.
3- Many typo errors
   a. Title of table S1- “an decrease” should be changed to “a decrease”.
   b. Page 9 last sentence “We also observed colocalization of -catenin with fascin in as analysed by confocal microscopy (Figure 3E, F).” has some missing words and it should read “We also observed colocalization of #-catenin with fascin in fascin overexpressing cells as analyzed by confocal microscopy (Figure 3E, F).”.
   c. Page 10 line 1, “Since, fascin” should be change to “Since fascin” with no comma.
   d. Figure S4A “K1” should be changed into “K14”.
   e. Page 16 line 8 “PI’3K” should be changed to “PI3K”.
   f. Page 17 line 14 “i.e, higher the fascin expression poorer is the survival” should be removed as it just repeat the prior sentence.
4- Figure S4 should be switched with Figure S3 as it appeared before Figure S3 in the result section.
5- Figure S1C was presented, but was not discussed anywhere in the results.
6- Page 4 line 10 “could be correlated” should be changed to “correlated” by removing “could be” as this is only a correlation.
7- Page 9 line 1 “(P=0.05)” was indicated on the figur1 2B as “P<0.05” and it should refer to Figure 2B and not 2A.
8- Short paragraph discussing the migration and invasion should be included in the method section.
9- Page 12 line 7-9 “In addition, fascin expression significantly correlated with recurrence (Figure 6D; P = 0.038) whereas fascin non expression demonstrated statistically significant correlation with disease free survival (Figure 6C; P = 0.013).” should be edited into “In addition, fascin expression significantly correlated with increased recurrence rate (Figure 6D; P = 0.038) and shorter disease free survival (Figure 6C; P = 0.013).”.
10- Page 13 line 5, “could be associated” should be changed to “associated” by removing “could be” as this is only association.
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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