Author's response to reviews

Title: The expression and clinical significance of extracellular matrix protein 1 and vascular endothelial growth factor-C in the lymphatic metastasis of human breast cancer

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Version: 4 Date: 21 October 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors and Reviewers:

Thank you for your comments concerning our manuscript entitled “The expression and clinical significance of extracellular matrix protein 1 in the lymphatic metastasis of human breast cancer” (ID: 1899149268567887). The comments are valuable and very helpful for revising and improving our paper, with important guiding significance to our researches. We have read the comments carefully and made some corrections. The revised contents are marked with “tracked changes” in the manuscript, besides checking our revised manuscript to conform to the journal style. The responds to the reviewer’s comments are enclosed.

We appreciate for Editors/Reviewer’s warm work earnestly, and hope that the corrections will increase the priority of our manuscript for publishment.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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Responds to the reviewer’s comments:

Reviewer's report:

Title: The expression and clinical significance of extracellular matrix protein 1 and vascular endothelial growth factor-C in the lymphatic metastasis of human breast cancer

Version: 3 Date: 9 September 2011

Reviewer: Ferdinando Mannello

Reviewer's report:

The revised version of ms has been improved in several crucial aspects. I believe that the increase of patient numbers (and the inclusion of another specific lymphoangiogenic factor) may be surely useful (but not essential at this point) and may significantly strengthen the paper making it surely an article of outstanding merit and interest in its field.

Response: Thank you for the comments. Considering the conscientiousness, we would like to insert a section to discuss the relatively small number of patients as a limitation to our study (refer to the last paragraph of DISCUSSION section).

In the present study, both mRNA and protein expression of *ECM1* were significantly elevated in breast cancer tissues compared with those in the adjacent normal epithelium and the protein expression was positively correlated with LMVD, though the small sample size may limit the statistic power.

Specimen collection is time-consuming. Meanwhile, gaining specimens including breast cancer tissues, the matched noncancerous breast epithelial tissues and one of the suspicious metastatic axillary lymph nodes from the same patient who have never received preoperative treatment and metastasis tumors needs more time. So, if the number of patients is not
required rigorously, should we retain the number of cases and modify certain presentations in the discussion?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Response: Thank you for your kind consideration.

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'.