Reviewer’s report

Title: Calpain system protein expression in carcinomas of the pancreas, bile duct and ampulla

Version: 1 Date: 13 June 2012

Reviewer: Nikolajs Zeps

Reviewer’s report:

The hypotheses presented are clear and the methods and patient populations are appropriate to answer them. The manuscript is generally well written and logically presented allowing the reader to comprehend the topic, clearly see the contribution of new data and to see how it fits within the literature. It is a relatively small study using just one technique and therefore presenting only one line of evidence about the importance of the expression of calpains and calpastatin in pancreatic and bile duct and ampullary cancer cohorts. However, the authors acknowledge this and place their findings suitably in context. It is intriguing that their findings differ from those observed in breast cancer and that there appears to be a dissociation between calpain levels and calpastatin and this needs further exploration at a functional level.

Discretionary revisions

It was surprising that tumour size, grade, lymph node involvement and vascular invasion were not associated with survival (pg10/11). Can the authors comment on this as I would have thought these should have been important. Also, calpastatin expression was associated with LVI in the breast (Storr et al Breast 2011) and I didn’t see that discussed here.

Minor essential revisions

Pg 4 Background para 2 line 8 :…;these include autolysis of the catalytic subunit,…..”

Pg 12 Discussion first para line 12 “…that has not previously been observed…”

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
none to declare