Author's response to reviews

Title: Serum soluble ST2 is a new potential immune-related marker for ER-positive breast cancer

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Prof. Cherrylyn Raytos
Editor-in-Chief Journal Editorial Office BioMed Central

We thanks very much to the reviewers' comments#We have edited our manuscript according to that.

Reviewer Massimo Guidoboni
Reviewer's report:
The paper from Lu et al firstly provides evidence of a possible prognostic role for serum soluble ST2.

Although this work provide several interesting data, one major and some minor observations arose from the critical reading of the paper.

Major point
The authors cannot draw the conclusion that sST2 has an independent prognostic value. In particular, they did not sufficiently indagated the possibility that higher sST2 values observed in ER+ tumors are not associated to a different prognosis per se but are instead related to a biological subclass of breast tumors.

In this respect, sST2 levels in patients carrying ER- tumors do not seem different from those observed in healthy subjects (see figures 1 C and E).

If this was true, the authors should evaluate whether sST2 serum levels have a prognostic significance within the single subgroups (or, should perform multivariate analysis).

Yes, we agree with the reviewer that we should not draw the conclusion that sST2 has an independent prognostic value and we have revised that correctly. It is true that sST2 levels in patients carrying ER- tumors have no significant difference with those observed in healthy subjects. So we have evaluated the
prognostic significance of sST2 serum levels only within the ER positive subgroups

Minor points
1. Page 6: the authors should provide appropriate statistical testing showing that the distribution of patients' and controls' age is not significantly different. Student's t test shows the distribution of patients' and controls' age is not significantly different. And we have added it to the Materials and Methods section.
2. It seems that patients have been prospectively enrolled in the study: the authors should explicit it in the material and methods section.
   Yes, all patients have been prospectively enrolled in the study and we have explicit it in the material and methods section.
3. No information is provided about the timing of serial serum sampling (i.e. how many days/weeks before and after therapy?): the authors should provide this information in the Materials and Methods section.
   Sorry, we have provided the timing of serial serum sampling in the Materials and Methods section.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
Ok, we have extensively edited the written English already.
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Reviewer: Miodrag Lukic
Reviewer's report:
The results presented in this paper are worth publishing but the text requires extensive revision by native English speaker.
Yes, we have extensively edited the written English already.
Discussion should be rewritten and more focused.
OK, we have rewritten the discussion and make it more focused.
Also, references in the text are mentioned in an unusual way. I would be happy to look at the improved version of the paper.
Ok, we have changed references properly.
Thus paper needs major compulsory revision. Statistical review was not done by this reviewer but it is essential that the manuscript be reviewed by an expert statistician.
Thanks, we have extensively revised the paper, and we have assessed the
statistics by an expert statistician.

Sincerely yours
Yunfei Wu