Reviewer’s report

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

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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).

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.

2. It seems that patients have been prospectively enrolled in the study: the authors should 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.

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.