Reviewers report

Title: Cytokine and Immunoglobulin Production by PWM-stimulated Peripheral and Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes of Undifferentiated Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma (NPC) Patients

Version: 1 Date: 2 July 2004

Reviewer: Lawrence L Young

Reviewers report:

General
This is an interesting paper which attempts to address the contribution of the immune environment to the ability of NPC to evade immunosurveillance. There is a confusion in the rationale for this study between the ability to successfully isolated EBV-specific cytotoxic T lymphocytes (CTLs) from NPC patients and the activity of these cells in cytotoxicity assays. The major point is that even if such CTLs can be demonstrated ex vivo, this activity is somehow suppressed in vivo. The experimentation is straightforward and demonstrates significant differences in the ability of lymphocytes derived from normal versus NPC patients to respond to PWM stimulation.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
A major concern is the inevitable variability in the lymphocyte populations used in these studies which will be a mixture of B cells, T cells and other mononuclear cells. This complicates the interpretation of the data. For instance, the increased secretion of IL-2 and IL-10 from patients PBL and TIL may simply reflect increased numbers of specific T cell subsets in the patients versus control normal donors. This needs to be addressed by examination of both lymphocyte numbers and detailed phenotypic characterisation of these cells. This concern is also relevant to the secretion of immunoglobulin (Ig) from B cells - the number of B cells in each of the lymphocyte preparations should be determined and Ig secretion accordingly corrected.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None