Reviewer's report

Title: HIF1-alpha overexpression indicates a good prognosis in early stage squamous cell carcinomas of the oral floor

Version: 1 Date: 20 April 2005

Reviewer: Kurt Werner W Schmid

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting study dealing with immunohistochemically demonstrated hypoxia-inducible factor 1 alpha (HIF-1) on a series of 85 T1/2 squamous cell carcinomas of the oral floor. The authors showed a statistically significant positive association of HIF-1 overexpression with the 5-years survival rate and the disease-free period of the respective patients. Furthermore, the subgroup of node-negative cancers without HIF-1 expression was related to poor clinical outcome. The authors thus conclude that patients with node-negative T1/2 carcinomas lacking HIF-1 may be candidates for adjuvant radiotherapy.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The message of a diffuse overexpression of HIF-1 in carcinoma of the oral floor would be certainly much better appreciated if the authors could show that in selected cases (e.g., three HIF-1 positive, three HIF-1 negative cases) not only two 0.6mm measuring punch biopsies but also the remaining tumour exhibits or lacks HIF-1 expression. Furthermore, these may offer the opportunity to investigate the "invasive front" of the respective tumours in order to exclude the possibility of a different HIF-1 expression in this prognostically relevant tumour area.

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?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests