Reviewer's report

Title: Cytokeratin 8/18 expression indicates a poor prognosis in squamous cell carcinomas of the oral cavity

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Reviewer: Vera C Araujo

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript deals with the relationship between cytoskeleton proteins expression in oral squamous cell carcinoma and the tumor prognosis. The study includes a large sample of 308 patients presenting squamous cell carcinoma of the floor of the mouth. It was based on the hypothesis that some of these intermediate filaments can be used as a marker of prognostic behavior. Nevertheless there are points that merit some comments:

1. Which is the criterium for the choice of the intermediate filament studied? For example CK1 and CK10 are specially expressed in epidermis and not in non-keratinized epithelium as the mucosa of the floor of the mouth. On the other hand CK13, which was not studied in this research, is the most expressed cytokeratin of the oral mucosa present in the spinous layer and should therefore be included in this work, as a good marker of differentiation of the tumor cells.

2. Unexpected CK14 was present in only 107 cases out of 266 cases investigated. As it is well known CK14 is a marker of squamous cell carcinoma, being present in almost all the cells of tumor of this origin. If Ck 14 is not present in the tumor the diagnose of squamous cell carcinoma may be questioned.

3. In the chapter of discussion the authors compared the expression of CK8/18 in tumor cells with those in culture. This statement does not seem appropriate since carcinoma cells in culture always express CK8/18 in response to a functional adaptation for a monolayer distribution.

4. Unfortunately, no illustration is available in order to analyze the morphology of the tumor and the quality of the reactions.

Based on the above statements I can not recommend this manuscript for publication.

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No