Title: Preliminary study of p53 and c-erbB-2 expression in gallbladder cancer in Indian patients

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Version: 8 Date: 29 March 2006

Author's response to reviews: see over
Author's response to reviews

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Reviewer's report

A Preliminary study of p53 and c-erbB-2 expression in gallbladder cancer in Indian patients

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4 6 January 2006 Version: Date:
Niki J Agnantis Reviewer:
Reviewer's report:

General

> 1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The question is not new, since there are several relevant papers in the literature

No comments

> 2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
Yes

No comments

> 3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

No. The immunohistochemical data for c-erb2, as presented in the provided figures, are not convincing. The staining appears to be mainly cytoplasmic, with some attenuation in the submembranous area, but there is no clear cut membranous staining. As is well-known, only the membranous staining of c-erb2 appears to be meaningful.

We have taken all the intense c-erbB-2 membranous staining as a positive staining in well to moderately differentiated cases whereas cytoplasmic staining in few poorly differentiated cases were also regarded as a positive staining. This result is very well supported by few studies [25, 26] where cytoplasmic positivity along with membranous staining was regarded as positive. This has now been included in the discussion.

> 4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

No comments
> 5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
No. It is also surprising that the authors provide a very high percentage of gallbladder carcinomas in their series.

The incidence of gallbladder cancer is high in the area where this research work has been carried out. This has been well documented in the literature. If the editor wants, the supporting references can be provided e.g.

It is well established that north India has one of the highest incidences of gallbladder cancer in the world – the incidence in women being as high as 9 per 100,000 per year; in Delhi, gallbladder cancer is the commonest gastrointestinal cancer in women [National Cancer Registry Programme. Two-year report of the Population Based Cancer Registries 1997-1998. New Delhi: Indian Council of Medical Research 2002].

> 6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
No. From the results it appears that there is only one case with co-expression of p53 and c-erbb2.

The title has been suitably modified.

> 7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

No comments

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The authors should change the title, since it does not accurately depict their results.

The title has been changed as mentioned above.

More cases should be examined, in order to acquire statistically significant data for the co-expression.
This is preliminary study that we have carried out; therefore more cases cannot be taken at this stage.

They should improve the immunohistochemical method used for the detection of cerbb2 and change the relevant figures.

The standard methods for immunohistochemical detection have been used. These are detailed in method section. The relevant figures are provided as well.

They should also add in the Discussion the relevance of cytoplasmic c-erbb2 staining.

In the discussion section relevance of cytoplasmic c-erbB-2 staining have now been included.

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)

Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the

What next?:

major compulsory revisions
An article of limited interest Level of interest:
Acceptable Quality of written English:
No Statistical review:
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that we have no competing interests'