Reviewer's report

Title: Smad4-expression is decreased in Breast Cancer Tissues: a retrospective study

Version: 1 Date: 21 November 2005

Reviewer: Horst Bürger

Reviewer's report:

General
SMAD signaling in invasive breast cancer is highly complex and influenced by a number of pathways. The TGF-β-pathway belongs to the most investigated pathways in this context. This study adds further well known and new perspectives to this knowledge. It is a well straightforward written manuscript transferring cell culture results onto the tissue level.

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

The authors focus onto the prognostic value of SMAD4-expression in breast cancer and investigated 197 invasive breast cancer cases treated over the period of 13 years. Compared for the long period, that’s a rather low number of tumours. What kind of selection have led to this dysbalance? Were all patients treated equally? I assume that the treatment regimens changed over this long time. Might there be a bias in the interpretation of the prognostic results in the view of these concerns? Even though the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Robert Bosch Foundation contributed to the financing of this study, it is not appropriate to express the gratitude twice in the acknowledgements.

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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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'