Author's response to reviews

Title: TGF-beta receptor 2 downregulation in tumor associated stroma worsens prognosis and poorly differentiated tumors show more tumor associated macrophages and lower TGF-beta1 expression in colon carcinoma: a retrospective study

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear editor, dear reviewers,

in the present version of our article we made several changes and included further statistical analysis as well as an additional table containing a summary of immunohistochemical results. We tried to shorten the main title and tried to improve the written English. In the following now the detailed description of the changes according to the comments of both reviewers:

reviewer 1 (Diego Arango; Referee 2: http://www.biomedcentral.com/imedia/2106194615132532_comment.pdf):

Dear reviewer,

Thank you for your comments. In the following we tried to improve the text according to your suggestions:

1. We tried to improve the description in each chapter of the results section and added one table to summarize all the comparisons we have made. We are sure it's now easier to follow our thoughts.

2. We took your suggestion and put the association of elevated TAM levels with survival and distant metastasis into perspective, as it is in fact not statistically significant.

3. We changed the term 'recent study' in the two indicated lines to 'present study' and 'recently published study' respectively to avoid misunderstanding.

Further we shortened the title and tried to improve the English writing of the whole article.

reviewer 2 (Yoshifumi Nakayama; Referee 1: http://www.biomedcentral.com/imedia/9273102971319032_comment.pdf):

Dear reviewer,

Thank you for your comments. In the following we tried to improve the text according to your suggestions:

1. We further included staging, lymph node metastasis, depth of invasion and 5year rate of distant metastasis in table1. Distant metastasis at time of presentation was criterion for exclusion of the patient, so no data on this point can be delivered.

2. Detail data on TGFbeta expression in tumor-associated stroma and infiltrating tumor tissue is now summarized in another table to clarify the comparisons we have made.

The mentioned fact of less differentiated (discussion section) and high grade tumors (results discussion) showing higher levels of TAMs is no contradiction, because in this context we used the term high grade for tumors showing high histological grade (G3 and G4), which is only a different term term for less differentiated. To avoid this misunderstanding we changed the description and now omit the term 'high grade'.

We also included our point of view concerning TAMs in colon cancer.

3. Another table is added summarizing the results of TGFbeta expression in tumor and associated stroma.

4. We included further univariate and multivariate analysis concerning TGFbeta, TGFbeta receptor and Smad expression in table 3.

5. We added our view about cell types expressing TGFbeta receptors and Smads.

Further we shortened the title and tried to improve the English writing of the whole article.

We hope the changes we have made meet your expectations and look forward to your decision.

Yours sincerely

Arno Dimmler