Reviewer's report

Title: Tumor associated macrophages and TGFbeta1 expression are related to histological grade of differentiation and downregulation of TGFbeta receptor 2 in tumor associated stroma is an independent prognostic factor in colon carcinoma: a retrospective study

Version: 2 Date: 10 February 2007

Reviewer: Yoshifumi Nakayama

Reviewer's report:

General

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

Title: Tumor associated macrophages and TGF-?1 expression are related to histological grade of differentiation and downregulation of TGF-? receptor 2 in tumor associated stroma is an independent prognostic factor in colon carcinoma: a retrospective study.

Author indicate the significance of TAM expression and TGF-? pathway in colon carcinoma. The interaction between colon cancer cells and surrounding host cells is interesting. The research about the expression of TAM, TGF-?, TGF-? receptors and Smads in tumor tissue and in tumor stroma is very important. However, the results in this paper is not put in order. I think this problem should be improved.

1) Characteristics of the patients in Table 1 is unsatisfactory. The staging, lymph node metastasis, depth of tumor invasion, distant metastasis et al should be indicated in Table 1.

2) Detail data about TAM in tumor-associated stroma and infiltrating tumor tissue is unclear. Author should indicate these data on Table. In discussion, author wrote “we found higher levels of TAM in less differentiated tumors”. However, in result, author wrote “only the latter showed a significant correlation to histological grade of differentiation with high grade tumors showing rate of TAMs.” Which is real result ?. Although the significance of TAM expression in colon cancer is very complex, author should indicate the author’s standpoint about this problem according the results.

3) The results were difficult to understand. Additional Tables will be need which indicate the result of TGF-? pathway in tumor tissue and in tumor-associated stroma.

4) Why the parameters such as staging, depth of invasion, distant metastasis, TGF-? expression in the tumors, TGF-? R1 expression in stroma and Smads expression in tumor stroma are not analyzed in univariate or multivariate analysis ?. The author should additional analyze these parameters and indicate these result in Table.

5) What cells express the THF-? receptors or Smads ? Author will speculate about this point.

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?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.