Reviewer's report

Title: Association of loss of epithelial syndecan-1 with grade, stage, and local metastasis of colorectal adenocarcinomas: an immunohistochemical study of clinically annotated tumors

Version: 1 Date: 24 March 2008

Reviewer: Luigi Ricciardiello

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript by Hashimoto and colleagues report that expression of Syndecan 1 does not correlate with patient survival in 131 colorectal cancers that were analyzed by immunohistochemistry. They found, concordantly to other reports, that Syndecan 1 expression is associated to TNM and lymph node metastasis.

Major Comments
1. While the former results are somehow new, the latter have been already reported. 2. Although the authors claim it is a large population, the study is based on 131 patients only. While this is sufficient for biological analysis, it is not a sample size suitable for clinical evaluation and survival analysis.
3. The population that the authors have studied is not matched per sex, age, lymph node metastasis and location. Thus it is difficult to draw real conclusive data.
4. The association between Syndecan 1 expression and stromal fascin is not of relevance to this study. The authors speculate about expression of Syndecan-1 in myofibroblast without using a suitable marker for this cell type, such as alpha-SM actin. Thus the last paragraph of the discussion is all speculative.

Minor comments
How many researchers performed IHC? were they blinded in the scoring?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests