Author’s response to reviews

Title: Prognostic parameters for recurrence of papillary thyroid microcarcinoma

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Author’s response to reviews:

September 12th, 2008

Dear Editor.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to these comments and believe our manuscript has been clearly improved by this revision. We hope that the changes are satisfactory and that the manuscript is now suitable for publication in BMC Cancer.

We highly appreciate kind and helpful comments from the referees. We have carefully considered each of the issues were raised by the two reviewers and have addressed each concern in a point-by-point fashion in the attached letter and in the revised manuscript.

Revision or Insertions are shown with the following attributes and color: Bold, Red.

Thank you for your kind consideration in advance and I am looking forward to hearing good news.

Sincerely yours,

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[Authors’ contributions]

TYK drafted the manuscript. SJH carried out operation of the patients and participated in acquisition of informed consent and preparing the manuscript. JMK participated in collection of data and participated in study design. WGK performed the statistical analysis and participated in revision of manuscript. GG reviewed all the pathology slides of the study subject. JSR and WBK participated in acquisition of recurrence data in study subjects and coordinated the study. SCY is a professional statistician and performed the re-analysis of the data in revised manuscript. YKS conceived of the study and participated in the development of manuscript and revision. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

[Response to Reviewer 3 ]

(1) Table 4, Row with Age at Operation, Middle Column: The HR says "INF" but the 95%CI says "0.67-2.76". How can one have an infinite HR with a finite-ranged 95%CI? I'm guessing the HR should be finite and probably equal to about 1.36.

: We thank you for identifying our error. We have corrected 95% CI “0.67-2.76” as NC. (Table 4, page 27)

(2) Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6, referring to the rows where the HR, 95% CI, and P-value are all indicated with a dash for the reference groups (age>45, "Women, "Multifocal tumor", etc.): For these reference groups, report HR as 1.00 instead of using a dash. Continue using a dash for their 95% CI and their P-values. A HR of 1.00 accompanied by dashes for 95% CI and P-value is the customary way to indicate which group is the reference group.

: Thank you for your valuable comment. We have modified HR of the reference groups as 1.00 in revised manuscript (Table 3,4,5, and 6)

(3) Abstract, red sentence in the Results part that says "Multivariate analysis with using Cox's proportional hazard model showed...". Let's shorten that. Simply say "Multivariate Cox-regression analysis showed...".

: Thank you for your comments. We have modified that sentence as you indicate. (Abstract: page 2, Result section, line 6)

(4) Methods, in the Definition of Clinical Outcome paragraph. I like the red sentence, but it's missing a couple of words and there are a couple other words I
want to change. Make the red sentence read as follows: “The time to recurrence was defined as duration between the date of first operation and date of detection of recurrence by diagnostic procedure (for those who recur) or last show-up date to our hospital (for those who do not recur).”

: We appreciate the comment and have corrected the sentence in revised manuscript (Patients and Methods: page 7, Definition of clinical outcome section, line 4)

(5) Methods, in the Statistical Analysis section, starting on Page 8, just call it "Cox regression" instead of "Cox’s proportional hazard model", and distinguish more clearly between univariate versus multivariate Cox regression. May I suggest the following passage for your use: “Univariate analyses were performed separately for each variable using Cox regression. Variables for which the P value was <.2 in univariate analysis were included in a multivariate Cox-regression model. A backward elimination process was used to develop the final multivariate model, and adjusted hazard ratios (HR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated. P values of <.05 were considered significant.”

: Thank you for your kind suggestion. We have modified the paragraph as you indicate. (Patients and Methods: page 7, Statistical Analysis section, line 4)