Reviewer's report

Title: Expression of the RON receptor tyrosine kinase and its association with tumourigenic phenotypes in gastric carcinoma

Version: 1 Date: 15 July 2008

Reviewer: ernest camp

Reviewer's report:

Dear Dr. Nelson,

In the manuscript entitled “Expression of the RON receptor tyrosine kinase and its association with tumourigenic phenotypes in gastric carcinoma”, the authors evaluate the relationship of RON with clinicopathologic factors associated with gastric cancer. This was accomplished by immunohistochemical and Western Blot analysis of surgical specimens. They also evaluated the role of RON splice variants. Overall, the methods used to evaluate the proposed questions are appropriate and important information is gained by their analysis similar to what has been observed in other organ systems.

Comments:

1. In the methods, the method of determining RON staining should be more clearly defined such as who performed the analysis or was it a blinded evaluation, at what magnification, and how many images per tumor were evaluated.

2. The authors referenced paraneoplastic tissue throughout the paper as part of their evaluation. The significance of this evaluation needs to be made more clear. In the methods, paraneoplastic tissue should be better defined as well as in the results. It was unclear to me as to the significance of this portion of the analysis as compared to the RON staining of the neoplastic tissue.

3. The observation of the RON splice variants is very interesting although the authors did not report the significance in terms of the relationship to clinicopathologic factors. Further analysis would be very interesting and clinical correlation with the splice variants would be important to understand.

4. In the discussion, the statement discussing the significance of RON staining “furthermore, the results of the study…..” is unclear and need rewording. Since no correlation was observed with overall prognosis and long-term survival, this summary statement needs to more reflect the findings in the results section.

5. In the title, the use of tumourigenic phenotypes is unclear and should be revised.

In summary, the authors contribute to the growing evidence of RON’s significance in tumor progression focusing on gastric cancer. Unfortunately, as the authors point out, the short follow up likely limited survival analysis. As RON
correlated with more severe disease, a difference in survival would be expected and a median follow up of less than two years was just too early of an analysis. Overall, this manuscript warrants publication with revisions as suggested above. Thank you for allowing me to review this paper.

Sincerely,
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**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'