Reviewer's report

**Title:** mRNA expression of the DNA replication-initiation proteins in epithelial dysplasia and squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 12 August 2008

**Reviewer:** Masatoshi Fujita

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**Title:** mRNA expression of the replication-initiation proteins in epithelial dysplasia and squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue

**Authors:** Li et al.

In this study, Li et al. found that mRNA expression of CDC6, Cdt1, MCM2 and CDC45 is up-regulated in epithelial dysplasia and squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue and suggest that examination of these mRNAs would provide some diagnostic values. I have some questions that should be addressed before publishing the manuscript in BMC Cancer.

**Major points:**

1. This study was carried out using patients’ samples. Therefore, I think it should be clearly stated in the manuscript that the study was approved by the Institute (or the samples were obtained from patients with consent).

2. Page 13, Discussion. The authors state “We found that CDC6, Cdt1, MCM2 and CDC45 mRNA expressions were significantly higher in malignant SCC than precancerous epithelial dysplasia”. However, Figure 2 shows that expression levels of Cdt1, MCM2 and CDC45 mRNAs are higher in severe dysplasia than SCC. I think this description may represent the result obtained with comparison between overall dysplasia and overall SCC. If so, please provide the data.

3. Table 3. The title of the table is “Relationship between histological grade and CDC6, Cdt1, MCM2 and CDC45 mRNA expression” and in the text, the authors say “Significant correlations between the target gene expression and the clinicopathological parameters were observed” (page 12, lines 4-7). However, in other parts, the authors state that there was no statistically significant overall correlation between histological grade and CDC6 (page 9, lines 15-18), Cdt1 (page 10, lines 9-11), MCM2 (page 11, line 4-7), or CDC45 (page 11, line 15-17). What are the clinicopathological parameters in Table 3?

**Minor points:**

Page 9, line 13: I suggest adding “between” before “moderate epithelial dysplasia and SCC”.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.