Reviewer's report

Title: Detection of mammaglobin mRNA in peripheral blood is associated with high grade breast cancer: interim results of a prospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 22 July 2007

Reviewer: Luc Dirix

Reviewer's report:

General

A very interesting study with a impressive number of patient samples, which increases our knowledge on the presence of breast-cancer associated genes in peripheral blood, beyond the main conclusion of the authors, which are limited to mammaglobin. This is a timely study on multimareker RT-PCR, that will have the interest of all researchers active in this field any many breast cancer specialists.

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

None

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1) page 5, paragraph 2; line 2 : " bone marrow aspirates were obtained on the patients left and or right" :
as the authors surely know a lenghty and ongoing discussion on BM sampling relates to the optimal volume and number of sites of sampling. Do they have data to support double sided sampling as a means to increase the BM positivity rate ? In other words how many of the 177 patients had a double sided sampling done ?

2) page 6; line 1 : " Blood and bone marrow were then shipped at room temerature ..." : were there any limitations or criteria for the pre-analytical time frame ?

3) page 6 paragraph 2; final line : addition of glycogen : why was this considered essential ?

4) page 8 paragraph 1; line 7 : the aiuthors use Ct values in stead of the Delta-Delta CT and exclude samples based on a CT > 22 for beta-2 microglobulin; Perhaps I misread but I did not find how many samples were
rejected using this criterium.

5) Page 10: the observation that ERB2 signalling in PB is non-informative is much appreciated, and is indeed without any meaning unless a prior selection step.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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