Reviewers report

Title: Malignant transformation of oral potentially malignant disorders: a retrospective cohort study

Version: 5 Date: 29 April 2009

Reviewer: Giovanni Lodi

Reviewers report:

MATERIALS (patients?) AND METHODS
1 Minor Essential Revision: In my opinion patient selection is still unclear. My suggestion is to describe it with a sentence similar to the following: “We searched the files of all patients admitted at the Dental Clinic of Kaoshiung Medical University between month 1986 and month 2004 and selected all cases with a clinicopathological diagnosis of OPMD, this including hyperkeratosis, epithelial hyperplasia, epithelial dysplasia, verrucous hyperplasia and oral submucous fibrosis”

2 Minor Essential Revision: The retrospective design must be stated also in this section and it does not make sense the statement that “data were recorded prospectively during the patients’ first visit”. Please delete.

RESULTS
3 Major Compulsory Revisions: I am still puzzled by the male: female ratio that is 37:1 This is really too much. In the two papers mentioned by Authors in the discussion the ratio is 7.7 (ref 19 Hsue et al) and 0.9 (ref 15 Chung et al). Thus the present sample is absolutely unusual and there must be some selection bias and I am pretty sure that the problem would be the same if you include just patients after 1994 when National Health Insurance Scheme was introduced. Probably the best solution is to exclude the 4 females and to analyse just males, changing M&M and title.

4 Minor Essential Revision: I think figure 1 is wrong. It seems to indicate that the proportion of patients free of cancer is around 50% for both epithelial dysplasia and verrucous hyperplasia. This is not consistent with figures of manuscript.

DISCUSSION
5 Discretionary Revisions: Maybe too long

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

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