Reviewer's report

Title: Matrix Metalloproteinase-9 Mediated Inflammation Persists up to 6 Months after Smoking Cessation

Version: 1 Date: 25 November 2009

Reviewer: Simon Johnson

Reviewer's report:

This study asks an important question and the hypothesis is clearly stated. The prospective study design is appropriate. The main problem is the number of people who couldn’t stop smoking resulting in small numbers and the combination of groups of patients.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I assume that all people completing the study had measurements at baseline and 3 and if still abstinent 6 months but this isn’t clearly stated.

2. The number of patients/controls per group should be stated in figure 1 to make it easier to assess how robust the data is.

3. The table gives clinical details of all patients, the ones of interest are only those that completed the study and this should be removed unless they also contributed to the baseline values. If so this should be made clear.

4. The difference between the temporal profiles between MMP-7, -8 and -9 is interesting if this temporal profile is actually different between the MMPs. Is the fold change significantly different for the different MMPs across the time points? Not just compared with themselves at baseline.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. If MMP-9 is persistently raised this may be in keeping with the findings of Lowrey et al who showed that MMP activity was lower in patients with more severe COPD compared with healthy smokers, this could be discussed.

Discretionary Revisions

None

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'