Author's response to reviews

Title: Ageing and long-term smoking affects KL-6 levels in plasma, sputum and lung with significant correlations to COPD severity

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Dear Editor in chief of BMC Pulmonary Medicine

We would like to submit the manuscript entitled “Ageing and long-term smoking affects KL-6 level in plasma, sputum and lung with significant correlations to COPD severity” by Nobuhisa Ishikawa, Witold Mazur, Tuula Toljamo, Katri Vuopala, Mikko Rönty, Nobuoki Kohno, and Vuokko L Kinnula to BMC Pulmonary Medicine as an research article.

KL-6 is a high-molecular-weight glycoprotein classified as a human MUC1 mucin. Generally KL-6 has been investigated mainly in Japanese samples obtained from the circulating blood, but it has not been studied in samples obtained from non-Japanese young or middle aged/elderly subjects or non-invasive samples collected directly from the airways. We hypothesized that KL-6 might be associated with the pathogenesis of cigarette smoke induced lung damage and ageing and possibly with COPD. To test this hypothesis, the levels of KL-6 were assayed from plasma and induced sputum samples from young and middle aged/elderly Finnish non-smokers and smokers and patients with COPD. As far as we are aware, this is the first study on the effects of ageing and long-term smoking on KL-6 levels in plasma and induced sputum over a wide age range. In
the light of the above findings, the results are new, especially sputum KL-6 may be associated with COPD development.

This study represents original work that has not been previously published and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. No part of the study has been supported by tobacco industry. All of the authors of this manuscript have directly participated in the study. We hope that you find the results interesting to be published in BMC Pulmonary Medicine.

Sincerely, Vuokko Kinnula, professor of Pulmonary Medicine

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