Reviewer’s report

Title: Early and similar matrix alterations in alveolar and small airway walls of COPD patients.

Version: 3 Date: 30 March 2014

Reviewer: brian oliver

Reviewer’s report:

This I think is an interesting study but the limitations need to be addressed.

Major

Were the tissues inflated to a constant pressure?

The site of the tissue obtained for the non-COPD group should be given

The number of sections per patent stained for each factor needs to be stated.
The number of images analysed per sections should also be stated.

In the discussion the limitations of the approach need to be clearly stated. This manuscript did not use serological approaches to validate the staining intensity - this is a major criticism of the approach taken and needs to be addressed.

The collagen stain used - this needs further explanation, for example does it detect all types of collagen, and all types equally?

Are the comparisons to lung function necessary / redundant? The correlation’s are week at best. furthermore, as COPD is staged depending upon airflow limitation so it sort of like getting the same information twice. I do not really understand why why no differences were seen in the grouped data, and correlations were seen - but this obviously has something to do with the speed of FEV1 with a given stage..

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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