Reviewer's report

**Title:** Gene expression markers of tendon fibroblasts in normal and diseased tissue compared to monolayer and three dimensional culture systems

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 8 December 2008

**Reviewer:** Delphine Duprez

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This MS describes tendon gene expression in healthy and diseased equine tendons using qPCR.

This is a descriptive study.

One concern is the presence of Scleraxis in equine cartilage tissues.

Scleraxis expression data in mice are quite clear: Scleraxis is not expressed in cartilage (see the Scleraxis/GFP mice). Although this could reflect a difference between species, I wonder whether a contamination by surrounding tissue might have occurred in the sampling of the equine cartilage.

The diminution of Scleraxis expression in cell culture versus tendon samples is interesting. However, I am not sure that the level of expression in culture of Scleraxis alone is sufficient to conclude regarding the tendon phenotype of the cells in culture. The expression of tendon collagens might offer strong corroborating evidence for this assertion.