Reviewer's report

Title: Early increase in serum-COMP is associated with joint damage progression over the first five years in patients with rheumatoid arthritis

Version: 2 Date: 16 May 2013

Reviewer: Berit Grandaunet

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Comment 1: Clarify sample handling. The serum samples have been stored for nearly 20 years. It must be clarified if they have previously been thawed/refrozen or used for other purposes. This because stability of any measured protein always is a concern.

Comment 2: The radiographic progressors had the highest baseline ESR. ESR at baseline have previously been linked to radiographic progression in other studies e.g. the Euridiss study. These are the patients most likely to have the greater influx of inflammatory cells into the joint, the most severe synovitis and the greater induction of various proteolytic enzymes which degrade both the cartilage and the bone. Thus the logistic regression analyses should also be corrected for ESR.

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