Reviewer’s report

Title: Fibroblast activation protein-alpha-expressing fibroblasts promote the progression of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma

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Reviewer: Julia Tchou

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This study sought to understand the tumor promoting role of fibroblast activation protein (FAP) in pancreatic cancer. The authors evaluated FAP expression by IHC in a panel of human pancreatic cancer (n=48) and correlated clinical outcome with moderate and strong FAP (+) IHC staining defined arbitrarily by the number of stromal cells staining positive by IHC. The authors also reported that FAP expressing NIH3T3 fibroblasts promoted pancreatic cancer cell invasion using an modified chamber invasion assays. None of these findings are novel. The authors did demonstrate that co-culture of FAP(+) NIH3T3 fibroblasts with pancreatic cancer cells decrease proportion of cells G0/G1 phase and increased proportion of S/G2/M phase is associated with phosphorylation of retinoblastoma protein. The study is descriptive and additional experiments are necessary to further dissect this observation such as:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Are conditioned media from FAP+ NIH 3T3 sufficient to drive the increased level of P-Rb?
2. Gene expression profile differences in FAP+ NIH 3T3 vs. FAP- NIH 3T3 to identify candidate mediators of the Rb phosphorylation.
3. Will knockdown of Rb abrogate the effects of FAP+ NIH3T3?

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