Reviewer's report

Title: Remodeling of extracellular matrix by normal and tumor-associated fibroblasts promotes cervical cancer progression

Version: 2  Date: 28 December 2014

Reviewer: Martin Götte

Reviewer's report:

Reviewers report and minor essential revisions:

This manuscript investigates differences in the stromal expression of matrix molecules between normal cervical tissue and the microenvironment of cervical cancer specimens. The combination of histopathological investigation with an in vitro co-culture system allowing to study functional consequences of tumor-stroma interactions is a strong point of the manuscript. The authors finding of an altered matrix environment in tumorous tissue is an important finding, and corroborated by the in vitro results. The altered expression of integrins and their ligands in combination with a delineation of paracrine and contact-mediated effects of these molecules as a mode by which cancer-associated fibroblasts drive an invasive phenotype of cervical cancer cells is a functionally important finding of this study.

The study relies on solid methodology. The methods are largely described in sufficient detail, however, insufficient information is provided on the TMA patient samples: More information (age, stage of cervical carcinoma) should be provided at least in a Supplementary table. What was the medical indication for taking the normal control samples? Please provide more information, also on the primary tissues used to generate fibroblast cultures. The discussion Literature citations in the introduction and discussion are well-balanced, and the conclusions in the discussion are not overstated. Some language corrections are required, as outlined below:

Figure 2: „Fibronectin“ is misspelled
line 39: A comparison
line 52: the CSCC7
line 278: rates
line 306: was reduced
line 307 – what do the authors mean by “could it stimulate”? Please rephrase more clearly.
line 374: A similar
line 386: The tumor microenvironment plays
line 389: changes
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'