Reviewer's report

Title: Prognostic significance of Epstein-Barr virus infection in gastric cancer: a meta-analysis

Version: 3
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Reviewer: Masanao Murakami

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In this manuscript, Xuechao Liu and co-workers collected 372 studies from PubMed and EMBASE and finally they used 24 studies (6.4%) in their analysis. These 24 studies were almost recent studies, because I guess old studies did not carry out statistical analysis clearly. Although authors checked studies by Funnel plot and it kept symmetry, I felt Funnel plot was a slight lean. Moreover, excluded old studies showed evidences for prognostic state such as important character information in EBVaGC which are low frequency of apoptosis, less p53 abnormal expression, and higher expression of IL-1b. Surely, these publications did not mention about prognostic significance. The authors also mentioned in the text; there are several similar statistical reports. I understand importance of statistical meta-analysis, but compared to their results, I could not find ‘what’s new’ except large scale analysis.

Comment for individual text.
1) P2 l60 and P3 l71; The relationship between EBV and gastric cancers were already reported by Dr. Selves J et al, Dr. Yuen ST et al, Dr. Shibata D et al, Dr. Tokunaga M et al, and Dr. Galetsky SA et al. Therefore “EBV has gradually been considered” “EBVaGC has been identified as a distinct disease” should be changed.
2) P4 l70; add space after references.
3) P4 l86; Abbreviations should be spelled out in full when first used in the text.
4) Author should unify description <95%CI or 95% CI>.
5) P6 l122; Abbreviations should be spelled out in full.
6) P7 l138; add space after references.
7) Author should uniformed style for EBV associated gastric cancers. Author used several forms such as EBVaGC, EBV-positive GC, EBV-associated GC.
8) P14 l290; add space after references.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.