Author’s response to reviews

Title: High neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio confers poor prognosis in patients with small cell lung cancer

Authors:

Dan Liu (liudanscu@qq.com)
Yi Huang (huangyijy@med.uestc.edu.cn)
Lei Li (350927594@qq.com)
Juan Song (516209664@qq.com)
Li Zhang (zhangli7375@scu.edu.cn)
Weimin Li (weimi003@gmail.com)

Version: 1 Date: 29 Sep 2017

Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer 1

1.  Abstract: Please check English. Page 2, line 25/26, the word "cooking" is used.

Answer: We have changed it to “cooking oil fumes” according to the references that were published previously. The revised parts were highlighted in red. (Page 2, line 13 and page 5, line 17)

Results: Page 5, line 29/30 - check English - again "cooking" is mentioned

Answer: We have changed it to “cooking oil fumes” according to the references that were published previously. The revised parts were highlighted in red. (Page 2, line 13 and page 5, line 17)

2.  Line 37/38, it mentions that NLR and PLR are associated with several factors which reflect the inflammatory and "nutritional" status of patients. There is no indication in abstract before this regarding how "nutritional" status is addressed. Please clarify and within body of manuscript, if this is the case.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestions. We have clarified the factors in abstract and body of manuscript. (Page 2, line 20; page 3, line 11)

Answer: We have added these two references (ref.22 and ref. 23) and update all references in the manuscript.

4. Discussion:

Please include statement as to how this data is novel in comparison to what has been published already. Of note, there is a recent publication by Deng M et al in 2017, "Are pretreatment neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio and platelet-lymphocyte ratio useful in predicting the outcomes of patients with small-cell lung cancer?". Oncotarget. 2017 Jun 6;8(23):37200-37207. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.16553. How does the current manuscript add to the literature?

Answer: our study distinguishes from the researches that have been published already, even the recent publication by Deng M et al. First of all, the cutoff levels of NLR and PLR, which are based on our primary data and ROC analysis, are different from the previous studies. Secondly, we included a new factor of exposure to cooking oil fuel that may be associated with survival in patients with SCLC, especially in China. Besides, more variables, such as albumin, hemoglobin, cholesterol and metastasis sites, were included into the analysis, and multivariate analysis were performed to exclude the confounders that could affect the results. Finally, tumor stage is a most important variable that influence patients’ survival, so we stratified and analyzed by tumor stage to validate the roles of NLR/PLR for prognosis. In the discussion, we have compared our results with previous published studies.

Reviewer 2:

1. I have had some difficulties trying to understand what is written. I believe the written English should be revised. Simple mistakes as forgetting to leave a blank space between words can be acceptable, but not if they are present several times.

Answer: Thank you for your kind suggestions. We recheck the writing and asked the professional help to revise this manuscript in English usage.
2. Correct the title: it says "high neutrophilto". Add a space before "to".
Answer: Revised.

3. Abstract: line 25. Don't understand what "cooking" stands for.
Answer: We have revised to “exposure to cooking oil fume” according to previous studies.

4. Abstract: line 27. I would change smoking amount for smoking exposure.
Answer: That’s better expression. Revised. (Page 2, line 4)

5. Abstract line 40. Phrase "High NLR and PLR are associated with poor survival". I think it is redundant, as you have already written in line 29: "Kaplan Meier analysis revealed … NLR and PLR confers poor prognosis". I think you can delete the former.
Answer: Deleted.

Answer: I have revised it and rechecked it. (Page 3, line 9)

7. Results, line 52. It says "55 cases were at limited disease (LD) …". I would change it to "HAD limited disease", and "HAD extensive disease".
Answer: Revised. (Page 4, line 27)

8. Paragraph UNIVARIATE ANALYSES: don´t need to start Univariate or Multivariate with a capital letter, if it is not at the beginning of a sentence. Please change in the paragraph. Separate "analysis were incorporated" in the same paragraph.
Answer: the impropriate capital uses of “univariate” and “multivariate” have been revised. Maybe different Word version caused the space problems. In my computer, there were space between “analysis” and “were”.
9. Results. I would not use the head UNIVARIATE ANALYSES because under that head, you are explaining both univariate and multivariate analyses. I would rather use "RISK ANALYSES".

Answer: Revised.

10. Discussion, second paragraph. I would place a full stop instead of comma after referring to (2,11,24). Same paragraph: "However, Wang and his colleagues' …". I would rephrase to: "however, in the study by Wang et. al, elevated NLR was an …, confirming our results."

Answer: Revised.

11. Limitation section not properly addressed.

12. Answer: We have added the limitation part in manuscript.

13. I believe the explanation for acronyms used in tables should be placed in the footnote of each table they are being used or in the first table they are being used. Your acronym explanations is at the end of Table 3, rather than in Table 2. If the instructions for authors for this journal states otherwise, then follow instructions.

Answer: We have revised and added the explanation for acronyms in the Table 2 and the end of manuscript.

14. Why do you use Brinkman index instead of pack years of smoking, when calculating smoking amount?? I believe the latter is more widely used.

Answer: Brinkman index (BI) was calculated by multiplying the number of cigarettes smoked per day by the duration of smoking in years. This index was also used widely and commonly to estimate the cumulative dose of smoking. Besides, we initially collected the information of smoking history based on two variables, including the number of cigarettes smoked per day and the number of years of smoking.

15. You have inserted Table 4 twice (pages 21 and pages 22).

Answer: Revised.