Reviewer’s report

Title: Clinicopathological features and prognosis of gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasms in a Chinese population: a large, retrospective single-centre study

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Reviewer: Lefteris Chatzellis

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1. p.8 paragraph "Imaging studies"

The statistics of each imaging modality's success in detecting NENs are somewhat misleading. For example PET is 93% positive but in 29 cases only (probably the g3 tumors). Moreover, the choice of each modality depends on the site of origin and tumor histopathology i.e. PET/CT is indicated in g3 tumors but not g1, endoscopy is the examination of choice for rectal or gastric NENs but not for small intestinal or lung NENs. This paragraph should be rewritten and rephrased.

2. p.8 "PET-CT revealed increased metabolites" does not read well - needs rephrasing

3. p12 "Ethnic, regional and sample-size differences may lead to differences in the reported distribution of the primary sites of GEP-NENs"

I am not sure whether ethnic and sample-size differences are the only possible explanation for the differences mentioned. It seems there could be referral bias in the reported series (patients referred to Gastroenterology department) and thus comparison with epidemiological data from SEER and other national databases is not valid.

4. Lack of somatostatin receptor scintigraphy data is a relative weak point of the study.

5. Liver NENs and biliary tree NENs are reported to be extremely rare (<1%), however their incidence in the present study is surprisingly higher (4.3% and 3.6%). Presence of primary hepatic NENs is very difficult to be distinguished from metastatic NENs arising from other organs (requires exclusion of other primaries with imaging, scintigraphy and/or immunohistochemical markers). Maybe the term UPO-NEN (unknown primary origin) is more appropriate if diagnostic evaluation is not complete.

GENERAL COMMENT: Overall this paper reports the experience of a single-center institution in neuroendocrine tumors. Whether the findings represent the true figures for the entire Chinese or regional population is unclear. Several statistics reported such as incidence of each NEN, metastatic disease at diagnosis, percentage of functioning tumors etc, vary significantly from those in the European and north-American literature. Considering author affiliations (mostly from Department of Gastroenterology) referral bias could have played a role in the aforementioned differences.
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Yes

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