Reviewer’s report

Title: Small RNAs in metastatic and non-metastatic oral squamous cell carcinoma

Version: 2
Date: 9 March 2015
Reviewer: Zonggao Shi

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This study is about an important topic on oral cancer. The question was well defined. RNA sequencing is appropriate for the question.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. Potential sample selection bias was introduced by the use of a small group of T1 and T2 tumors with LN metastasis vs. another small group of T3 and T4 tumors. What criteria have been used to minimize the bias? Such possibility should be thoroughly discussed at least.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Which edition of the TNM staging criteria was used? The 7th edition? Cite the original source so that it becomes obvious to readers.
2. It seems that primary tumor tissues were used in the study, not the metastatic lesions from positive lymph nodes. This should be made clear.
3. On page 13, in the section for “Small RNA library construction and sequencing”, 18 libraries were made from 8 samples with LN metastasis and 8 without metastasis. What are the remaining 2 samples? Both 8s should be 9.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. Verifying with qPCR the differential expression of putative miRNA, candidate 12375, in the tissues would be interesting to have in this manuscript.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.