

April 22, 2013

Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the edited manuscript in Word format (file name: 2885-review.doc).

**Title: B cell depletion in scleroderma lung disease: A promising new treatment?**

**Author:** Dimitrios Daoussis, M.D. and Andrew P. Andonopoulos, M.D., FACP

**Name of Journal:** *World Journal of Rheumatology*

**ESPS Manuscript NO:** 2885

We have improved the quality of the manuscript according to the suggestions of the reviewers.

To our major surprise, we have been asked to improve the quality of the language. I can only assume that this is some kind of error. I can reassure you that the quality of the language is more than adequate. Please check this yourself or send it to an alternative reviewer. I am a Canadian citizen and I have worked for a long time in UK whereas Prof Andonopoulos has received all his medical training in USA. I have published many articles in major scientific journals and this is the first time that I receive a comment about the quality of the language!!!

Reviewer 1: Manuscript of interest, as new approaches to treat lung disease in SSc are needed. It could be of interest to develop, briefly, the underlying mechanisms that support RTX treatment in fibrotic lung disease associated to SSc. A table showing clinical features of SSc patients included in these studies as well as their outcome should be of interest to better understand the observed efficacy of RTX.

Reply: We have added some information and relevant references that support the potential pathogenic role of B cell in fibrosis (refs 2-4 of the revised manuscript). We have also added a Table according to the reviewer's suggestion

Reviewer 2: Well written manuscript. The object, immunosuppression in SSc associated lung disease is highly debated. The proposed approach of rituximab treatment is supported by small trials, however so far seems promising. The authors propose execution of an adequately large prospective trial. - please amend the text with a power calculation, based on the available data to assess how many patients should be included for adequate statistical power - I propose adding a figure demonstrating the short and long-term efficacy of rituximab compared to CPH.

Reply: We have added the requested information regarding the number of patients needed for the study

Many thanks for your time and consideration

Kind regards

Dr Dimitrios Daoussis