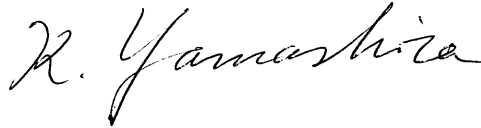


Conflict-of-interest statement

There is no conflict-of-interest in this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K. Yamashita". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Keishi Yamashita, MD, PhD, FACS
Department of Surgery
Kitasato University School of Medicine