

REPLY TO REVIEWERS



December 10, 2013

Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the edited manuscript in Word format (File name: **SLN and Tumor Differentiation-WJGS-Revised.doc**).

Title: Tumor differentiation as related to sentinel lymph node status in gastric cancer

Author: Ron Lavy, Andronik Kapiev, Yehuda HersHKovitz, Natan Poluksht, Igor Rabin, Bar Chikman, Zahar Shapira, Ilan Wasserman, Judith Sandbank, Ariel Halevy

Name of Journal: World Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery

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The manuscript has been improved according to the suggestions of reviewers:

1 Format has been updated

2 Revision has been made according to the suggestions of the reviewer

Reviewer No. 2

1- Presentation of the data is confusing. Maybe a simpler way to present the data would be as follows: Of the study patients, poorly differentiated tumors were found in 50 (70%). Of these 41 (82%) had sentinel nodes, of which 22 (54%) were positive. Conversely, moderately differentiated tumors were found in 21 (30%). Of these 17 (81%) had sentinel nodes, of which 7 (41%) were positive.

We thank the reviewer for the comment and agree that the data should be presented more simply. We have made the necessary changes and the presentation is now clearer (Results, paragraph 6).

2- The percentages quoted in the text regarding the percentage of SLNs identified are in error for poorly differentiated tumors they were positive in 70.7% NOT 71.9% and negative in 29.3% NOT 28.1%).

The percentages quoted in the text were erroneous and we have corrected them in all the necessary places.

3- Table 1 and figure 1 represent the same data. You only need to use one of them. However, the data does not match – as an example, the table states that there are 11 patients with stage 1-2 tumors in the moderately differentiate group, while the figure shows 12. All the numbers are different for each sub-group in the table compared to the figure

Table 1 and figure 1 do not represent the same data, the first one describes the T-stage and the second describes the general stage, and they are compared to the level of tumor differentiation. However, according to the recommendation of the editor, Table 1 has been omitted as the information represented in the Table is adequately described in the text.

Reviewer No. 3

1- Why was well-differentiated GC excluded from the study?

We decided to exclude well-differentiated GC from the study since they comprised less than 5% of the cases when surgery was not performed according to the D2 method.

2- What generally accepted classification system was used for grading and staging the tumors?

Tumor staging was according to the AJCC Cancer Staging Manual, 7th edition.

3- You stated that SLNs were identified in 58/71 patients (82%), and Positive SLNs were found in 22/41 patients in group I (53.7%) and 7/17 patients in group II (42.2%. What are the definitions for “SLNs” and “positive SLNs”? How many patients were in groups I (50 or 41?) and II (21 or 17?)?

The definitions for “SLNs” and “positive SLNs” was according to the dye identification by the pathologist or by the surgeon marking that stained node. The pathological technique for the SLN evaluation is explained in detail in the Methods section. Group I, meaning poorly differentiated tumors who had stained nodes, included 41 patients, group II (moderately differentiated tumors with stained nodes) included 17 patients.

4- Statistical analysis seems too simple.

Statistical analysis was performed at the Department of Statistics of the Tel Aviv University using the Chi Square Test, Fisher's Exact Test and the Mann-Whitney Test.

5- Discussion should focus on your major findings with highlights of the clinical significance of the findings; however, only the last paragraph is related to your findings, but it just repeats the results without any interpretation and comments on the significance of the findings.

Thank you for this comment. We have added another paragraph dealing with the clinical significance of the findings at the end of the Discussion section.

3 References and typesetting were corrected

Sincerely yours,