

Manuscript: A comprehensive review into the challenges of gastrointestinal tumors in the Gulf and Levant countries

Response to Reviewers Comments

Major Comments

1. This manuscript deals with GISTs "in the Gulf and Levant countries" (however, no data from these regions are provided). As it is a bit lengthy for the reader, I suggest shortening the passages conveying basic and textbook knowledge and focusing on challenges (as announced in the title)/current research and perspectives.

Author comment: Thank you for your comment. We agree that there is no mention of epidemiological data from the Gulf and Levant countries. This is due to the scarcity of such data, with few studies describing cases only. We have now included this within the manuscript, along with some supporting references (Makar RR *et al*, 2002; Al-Thani H *et al*, 2014; Bokhary RY *et al*, 2010; El Rassy E *et al*, 2017). We also agree that the article is lengthy, we have therefore reduced the manuscript by approximately 800 words by removing some of the content from the background, clinicopathological features, diagnosis and treatment sections.

2. As specific data concerning the Gulf and Levant countries are not really given, the title should be changed accordingly (so as not to raise wrong expectations).

Author comment: Thank you for your comment. As mentioned above, we have now included some additional text concerning the epidemiology of GIST in the Gulf and Levant countries. Given that the focus of the review is to review the challenges of GIST in the Gulf and Levant countries, which is what is done in the section entitled 'Local Challenges and Gaps in Patient Management' (page 25 line 519), we do not believe that the title of the review is misleading. Therefore, we will leave the title as it is.

Minor Comments

1. Permission for the tables/figures taken from elsewhere should be provided.

Author comment: Thank you for your comment, we have removed Figure 1 and Table 1 so there is therefore no need for the copyright permissions.

2. Abstract, first sentence: "they are the most common sarcoma" -> they are the most common sarcomas.

Author comment: Thank you for your comment, this sentence has now been updated.

3. Page 18, line 370: "Therefore, in addition to postoperative recurrence risk, mutation analysis should part of the decision-making process prior to imatinib adjuvant therapy initiation, as recommended by the ESMO and EUROCAN [1, 27, 35]." – This sentence is unclear.

Author comment: Thank you for your comment, we have now added in some additional text to clarify the above-mentioned sentence.

4. Page 24, line 512: "Further details on these emerging therapies is provided in Table 3." -> Further details on these emerging therapies are provided in Table 3.

Author comment: Thank you for your comment, this sentence has now been updated.