

Manuscript Title: Cryopreservation for delayed circulating tumor cell isolation is a valid strategy for prognostic association of CTCs in gastroesophageal cancer

Manuscript NO: 37031

Authors: Brungs D, Lynch D, Luk AWS, Minae E, Ranson M, Aghmesheh M, Vine KL, Carolan M, Jaber M, de Souza P, Becker TM.

Reviewer Code 03317263 Report:

This is a nice study. While I agree with the protocol, results and conclusions, I would like to see in the discussion section some comments on the clinical relevance of this study.

We would like to thank the reviewer for these comments. We agree that the manuscript is strengthened by further discussion on the clinical relevance of this study. We have added the following paragraph to the discussion section:

'Our results also show that enumeration of CTCs isolated from cryopreserved PMBCs is a valid prognostic biomarker in gastroesophageal cancer. Patients with metastatic disease had a significantly higher number of CTCs than those with resectable disease (mean CTC count 53.8 vs 15.8, $p=0.0013$). Moreover, patients with a high CTC count (>17) had a much poorer OS than those with a lower CTC count (≤ 17) (HR 4.4, $p=0.0013$). High CTC count remained significant in the multivariate analysis as an independent predictor of poorer OS (HR 3.7, $p=0.03$), after controlling for age, ECOG, sex, stage and primary tumour location, particularly when analysis was restricted to patients with metastatic disease only (HR 5.5, $p=0.01$) These results are concordant with other studies which confirm the utility of CTC enumeration as an important prognostic factor in gastroesophageal cancer'