

LETTER TO EDITOR: ADDRESSING OPACITY & STANDARDIZATION IN AN OXIDATIVE STRESS BIOMARKER STUDY

Abdullah Sikander.

Medical Student, Islam Medical & Dental College, Sialkot.

abdullahsikander15@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author:

Abdullah Sikander

abdullahsikander15@gmail.com

To the Editor-in-Chief,

I read with great interest the article by Qadir et al. titled “The Role of Prognostic Variables in the Maturation of Ovarian Cancer” [1]. As a medical student currently studying neoplasia and pathology, I commend the authors for addressing the burden of ovarian cancer in Pakistan, where data is often scarce. The combination of oxidative stress markers (like MDA and SOD) with inflammatory cytokines (TNF- α) and matrix metalloproteinases [1] highlights the complex interplay of the tumor microenvironment in cancer pathogenesis.

However, while studying this paper to better understand tumor marker analysis, I encountered several points that I found confusing and difficult to reconcile with standard oncological principles. I respectfully offer these observations in the spirit of academic learning and scientific rigor.

First, I struggled to follow the methodology because the “Materials and Methods” section does not detail how the biomarkers were quantified. The text states samples were “analyzed,” but it does not specify if the

authors used ELISA, spectrophotometry, or other assays, nor does it list the antibodies used. According to the REMARK guidelines (Reporting Recommendations for Tumor Marker Prognostic Studies), reporting assay methods is essential for reproducibility [2]. Without this, it is difficult for students or other researchers to validate or replicate these findings.

Secondly, I was confused by the distinction between “diagnostic” and “prognostic” terminology in the study. The title refers to

“Prognostic Variables” and the conclusion suggests these markers can be “early predictors”. However, the study appears to be a cross-sectional comparison of Stage III cancer patients versus healthy controls. While this may suggest a diagnostic association or potential for risk stratification, it does not establish prognostic value.

My understanding is that prognosis refers to the prediction of disease outcome (e.g., survival or recurrence) over time, which requires longitudinal follow-up, whereas this study design only supports a diagnostic association [3,4,5]. Recent meta-analyses on MMP-9 [3], for instance, carefully distinguish between its diagnostic sensitivity and its hazard ratios for overall survival; combining these concepts would be a mistake.

Furthermore, concluding that these markers are “early predictors” seems contradictory when the data is derived exclusively from patients with advanced (Stage III) disease. It is difficult to justify a marker as an “early” predictor when it has only been validated in a late-stage cohort. Additionally, MMP-9 is frequently misspelled as “MPP-9” in the abstract and results [1].

While the finding of oxidative stress in ovarian cancer is biologically plausible and supported by recent literature [4,5], the data presented here lacks verifiable methods and the misinterpretation of study design limits. I hope these observations are helpful to the

authors and the editorial team. Clarifying these methodological and terminological issues would greatly enhance the educational value of this research for students like myself.

Sincerely,

Abdullah Sikander,
Islam Medical & Dental College.

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