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The guarantors of this manuscript confirm that all persons designated as authors qualify for authorship, and that each author has participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

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3) Design & Methods. The following authors were responsible for specific investigations (please detail):
   - Eleni Arvaniti and Stavroula Ntoufa were responsible for experimental analysis, interpretation of the results and drafting of the paper.
   - Nikos Papakonstantinou and Tasoula Touloumenidou were responsible for providing clinical samples and associated data.
   - Nikolaos Laoutaris, Achilles Anagnostopoulos and Federico Caligaris-Cappio were responsible for designing and supervising the research and writing the paper.

4) Results. The following authors were responsible for specific portions of the results, including figures and tables (please indicate the person responsible for each figure and each table):
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   - Stavroula Ntoufa was responsible for flow cytometry studies.
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5) Writing the manuscript. The following authors were responsible for writing the manuscript:

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No other individuals than those listed as co-authors assisted with the study design, data collection, data analysis, or manuscript preparation.

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