Reviewer's report

**Title:** Using observational data to estimate an upper bound on the reduction in cancer mortality due to periodic screening

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**Reviewer:** Prof Martin McIntosh

**Level of interest:** A paper of considerable general medical or scientific interest

**Advice on publication:** Accept after discretionary revisions

Discretionary revision:

1) First paragraph in Background: it would be useful to have references for those methods which rely on "strong assumptions".

Suggested compulsory revision:

1) Background section especially the second paragraph: This is confusing (especially paragraph 2), but it is an important section; here you tell us the essence of your method. It is likely that many interested readers have are not familiar with G-comutation (who really is!). If you wish to convey an informat description of the work, I recommend that you either expand on it here and make it clear, or revisit this toward the end of the discussion, where you can then point out the connection to G-computation. The second paragraph of this section should be re-written and perhaps extended to make the point clearer. I had to read it several times to try and comprehend the point.

Advisable revision:

It would be interesting and instructive if one of the examples was worked to a greater level of detail. This greater level would include, perhaps, the analysis using some older method that assumes a specific growth model. Discussing the differences of the estimators would be useful. The other two examples could then be left to short presentations, as the currently are.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.