Reviewer's report

Title: Many Missed Opportunities for Earlier Diagnosis Occur in Patients Diagnosed with Colorectal Cancer

Version: 2 Date: 30 April 2008

Reviewer: Grazia Grazzini

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions

The manuscript by Wahls and Peleg is quite interesting and surely worthy of publication.

Authors said that one of the most common errors was due to the fact that many patients with a positive FOBT did not receive a complete diagnostic evaluation. This phenomenon is well documented in literature (1,2,3,4,5). Even in an organised cancer screening program where subjects with positive test result are advised to perform a colonoscopy, only about 80% of these patients complies with this recommendation (6,7).

Several papers have investigated factors associated with performing a complete colon evaluation after a positive FOBT. Attitude of physicians in ordering an appropriate assessment of colorectal tract is crucial. Despite the evidence that FOBT screening reduces the risk of death from colorectal cancer, many physicians do not conform to expert guidelines and do not proceed with any further examination, often deciding mistakenly to repeat the FOBT.

Faecal occult blood test-based colorectal cancer screening can be effective only if patients with positive test result receive an appropriate diagnostic evaluation. Positive predictive value of this screening test for cancer and advanced adenomas is significantly high in the best population-based screening programs (6,7). It is likely that this inappropriate behaviour of physicians might reflect a poor knowledge about the performance of the test. In this sense, specific educational interventions can be effective in improving the adherence of physicians to recommendations.

I suggest that Authors introduce this topic in the final comments.


**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests