Reviewer's report

Title: Reproductive factors and oesophageal cancer in Chinese women: a case-control study

Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2011

Reviewer: Neal D Freedman

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions:

The authors have done an excellent job responding to my comments and those of the other reviewers.

I have several additional points which should be addressed by the reviewers before the manuscript is acceptable for publication.

1. Please add the results for age at menopause to the abstract and to the results section (top of page 9).


3. The authors mention that the male/female ratio is up to 8:1 in Western countries; yet somewhat lower in Asian countries. According to globalcan 2008, the overall sex ratio for esophageal cancer is about 2 in China. Thus, the authors statement is misleading.

4. On the top of page 5, the authors mention that “tobacco smoking plays only a moderate role as a risk factor for this cancer.” This statement is false. Smoking is a strong cause of esophageal squamous cell carcinoma and is a consistent risk factor for esophageal adenocarcinoma as well. In most western populations, men and smoke similar amounts. Thus, in Western populations, differences in smoking use between men and women are not likely to cause higher rates of esophageal cancer in men.

In China, however, men tend to smoke more cigarettes and drink more alcoholic beverages than women. It is possible that these differences in cigarette smoking and alcohol drinking may explain part of the difference in esophageal cancer incidence rates in men and women in China. The authors should mention these points.

5. The authors should clearly indicate in their introduction that while several studies have investigated the association of menstrual and reproductive factors with esophageal adenocarcinoma, few studies have examined associations with esophageal squamous cell carcinoma. As currently written, this section implies that esophageal adenocarcinoma in Western countries is comparable to esophageal squamous cell carcinoma in China, it is not.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.