Reviewer's report

Title: Delayed diagnosis of coeliac disease increases cancer risk

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Reviewer: Timothy Richard Card

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a further paper looking at the association between malignancy and coeliac disease. It is somewhat different to many others in that it examines malignancy diagnosed before or simultaneous with the diagnosis of Coeliac disease. Though this confers some novelty it also unfortunately ensures that the study cannot be easily interpreted as there is a great risk of bias in the ascertainment of the diagnosis of coeliac disease. It is of course to avoid this problem that it is conventional not only not to study pre-existing diagnoses of cancer in such studies, but also to censor those from the early part of follow up. To put it more simply we cannot come to any reasonable conclusion about whether this paper shows that people with cancer see doctors more and therefore more commonly have their coeliac disease detected, or people with coeliac disease get more cancer. This problem I believe since it results from the fundamental design of the study cannot be overcome by revision of the paper, and the authors have neither addressed it in their discussion nor suggested any clear benefit of their study design which could render it valid. The best explanation I can see for the study design used is that the authors wish to look at the effect of more prolonged gluten containing diet, and hence have used age at diagnosis as a proxy for duration of coeliac disease not treated by diet. I note with interest that they feel that the greater age of those with cancer is evidence that prolonged gluten exposure is carcinogenic. Unfortunately I feel one could contend with at least equal validity that the results found in this respect reflect only the well known fact that malignancy is in general more common with advancing age. I regret therefore that I cannot recommend publication of this paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.