Reviewer’s report

Title: Radiation Therapy for Desmoplastic Medulloblastoma - A Retrospective Analysis of Outcome and Prognostic Factors

Version: 2 Date: 21 January 2010

Reviewer: Jacques Grill

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MAJOR REVISION
A control group of contemporary patients with non-desmoplastic medulloblastoma treated at the same center is needed to support the statement that desmoplasia could be a favorable prognostic factor. Seven patients dead of disease in this small cohort is worse that one would see in a pediatric series of desmoplastic medulloblastoma (eg Rutkowski NEJM 2005). The authors may choose either a matched controlled study, controlling for the main known prognostic factors in adults (i.e., extent of resection, metastases...).

Pediatric patients should be removed. There is no indication that this histological entity in children is similar to its adult counterpart. There is currently no biological data to support this assumption.

Survival curves with less than ten patients is not acceptable (especially for the analysis of the outcome after relapse).

MINOR REVISION
The authors should discuss further the difference between adult and pediatric desmoplastic medulloblastoma and comment on the biological differences so far reported.

Description of toxicity in patients receiving very different treatment is of no value since comparisons can not be made, in addition to the tautologic statement that if you add chemotherapy to radiotherapy you increase toxicity.

DISCRETIONARY REVISION
Description of the results of the pediatric trials in the discussion is out of the subject of the present report.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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