Demicheli and colleagues provide novel data on an important topic namely the pattern of local recurrence and mortality according to ER status and differing extents of conservative surgery following by postoperative irradiation. This is generally a well written paper. The methodology and statistical approach are generally well described, the discussion generally well balanced, the conclusion generally supported by the data and the reference list relevant and up to date. The data is drawn from randomized clinical trials within the Milan Cancer Institute so there should be little selection bias. However the individual trials from which the data is drawn should be more clearly specified.

The authors need to acknowledge the potential selection bias in the data. There may have been differences in surgical practice or systemic therapy among the trial data included in the analysis which could account for differences in local recurrence. The duration of follow up of these trials may also vary. A table describing these trials (TNM characteristics, patient numbers, interventions and median follow up) would be helpful.

Specific points

Abstract
Methods, line 3
‘breast’ instead of chest wall radiotherapy
Conclusions; Clarification on what is meant by ‘tumour-microenvironment dynamic interactions’

Introduction

Para 2 line 2. What is meant by ‘a synchronising effect of the surgical resection upon subsequent tumour biology’?
Last line. What is meant by ‘metastasis development timing’

Introduction page 2 last para, line 1. Do the authors mean ‘conservative’ rather than ‘circumscribed’

Local recurrence dynamics

Line 5. Do the authors mean ‘Hormone receptor negative patients rather than
‘Non receptor bearing cancers’?

Discussion

Line 6 . Clarification of ‘surgical synchronisation of distant recurrence’. These data are suggestive of this process but not definitive evidence of it.

Page 13 para 2, line 5 ‘persuasive’ instead of ‘persuading’

Page 14 line 9 english’ concurred to the formation’

It would be helpful if there was any preclinical data from which the authors could draw inferences on the relationship between primary tumour and metastasis.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.