Reviewer’s report

Title: Chemotherapy Followed by Surgery versus Surgery Alone in Patients with Oesophageal Squamous Cell Carcinoma: Long-term Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial

Version: 1 Date: 9 November 2010

Reviewer: Val Gebski

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory
a) A CONSORT flow diagram of patient screening & progression through the various stages of treatment etc should be provided – e.g. how many patients received the opposite treatment, how many did not proceed to surgery etc
b) Comparisons of outcomes by key subgroups should be provided (e.g. in a forest plot) together with tests for interaction. I would suspect that these would include the strata levels, tumour location, gender, and some of key variables in table 3. In fact table 3 is of limited value as it does not provide the reader of how these impact on outcome
c) P7 strata levels for tumour length, weight, age etc, and randomisation details should be provided in this section.
d) P10 2nd paragraph, use power and significance instead of beta & alfa (which is confusing). Also indicate whether comparisons were one or two-sided
e) P11 Please provide median follow-up time. Also, A table of toxicities (including surgical) needs to be included – the description in the text is inadequate
f) P12 under patterns of failure – you mean 30 days post surgery?
g) P13. Omit the p-value for the PH test – this was only performed to obtain an estimate of the HR. Comparisons were made by the logrank test. Given other studies have provided 2-yr survival these should also be given (maybe in lieu of the 12 month rates)
h) P13 A multivariate analysis of key factors should be provided (in a table) with appropriate commentary. This also should include a statement of all the variables which were originally considered.
i) P14 – were age, weight loss etc all significant in the multivariate analysis? If so the the complete MVA results should be reported & if not why were these specifically selected (some data dredging seems to be going on here)

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I have no financial/atent interest in this work but an academic one viz.,
We are currently conducting an updated meta-analysis on preroperative chemo
and chemoradiation for oesophageal cancer and one result presented in this
study (hazard ratio & CI for OS) would be important to include in our updated
alysis if the authors permit. Otherwise we will wait until publication.