Reviewer's report

Title: Lung Cancer Stage at Diagnosis: Individual Associations in the Prospective VI Tamins And Lifestyle (VITAL) Cohort

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Reviewer: Ian Paquette

Reviewer's report:

The authors are to be commended for a well designed and conducted study. Detecting lung cancer at an early, and potentially more treatable stage is a worthy goal for the public health community. I have a few minor comments listed below.

1) There was a 21.3% response rate to your survey. Although it might be unrealistic to expect a complete response rate to your survey, approximately 80% of the individuals did not respond to the survey. This should be at least mentioned in the limitations.

2) The goal of this paper was to examine cancer stage at presentation. Why are "unstaged" patients included. I realize there are a small number of unstaged patients (n=10), however, they should be excluded from the analysis of this data.

3) The major issue I have with the paper is in your interpretation of the effect of sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy on stage at presentation of lung cancer. You do mention that it was not specified if the endoscopy was done for screening or diagnosis of another complaint. It is likely that many of these exams were done for purposes other than screening. It may be that lower GI endoscopy is associated with overall participation in the health care system through screening and workup of GI complaints. In your multivariate analysis, it appears that the relationship of sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy to cancer stage only holds true for the group who quit smoking < 10 years ago. I would interpret your results to state that screening behaviors (mamography, PSA, sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy) do not seem to be associated with stage of lung cancer at presentation except for the relationship of sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy in the select group who quit smoking < 10 years prior. Please address this in your manuscript.

Overall, well written paper

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