Reviewer’s report

Title: Phase II Study of Weekly Paclitaxel and Capecitabine in Patients with Metastatic or Recurrent Esophageal Cancer (PACE)

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Reviewer: Florian Lordick

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The authors Tak Yun and colleagues report on the results of a phase II study investigating the activity of weekly paclitaxel + capecitabine in first- and second-line metastatic or recurrent esophageal squamous cell cancer.

My major points are:

1. This is clearly a study on squamous cell cancer of the esophagus. Many readers may be working in regions where adenocarcinoma is the predominating histological type of esophageal cancer. In my view it should be clarified already in the title of this paper that this study has been performed in the squamous cell type.

2. The reported response rates are higher than expected and that seen with comparable regimens in comparable patient populations. The authors do not clarify how they assessed response. Did all patients get CT scans? What were the intervals that were proposed in the study protocol for response assessment and were these intervals respected by the investigators. Were RECIST criteria applied? Do the authors report on confirmed responses? If not, what was the confirmed response rate (it may differ considerably from the reported rate in this paper). Were responses evaluated by the investigators or was an independent central response review board/radiologist involved?

Minor point:

1. The use of two decimal numbers for the survival durations (abstract and results) are uncommon.

2. Discussion: The authors speculate on different capecitabine doses explaining the differences in the observed rate of hand-foot syndrome in another study investigating a taxane-capecitabine –combination. There may be two other reasons to be considered. First, Lorenzen et al. investigated docetaxel-capecitabine, and not paclitaxel. Moreover, Lorenzen et al. investigated a Caucasian patient population, while Tak Yun et al. investigated a Korean population. Recent results suggest that the rate of hand-foot-syndrome in Americans and non-American Caucasians is higher than in East Asians.

3. Table 5 is not very informative. The information is already given in the text. In my view table 5 could be skipped.

4. Reference 25 and 29 are on the same study (one abstract and one full publication). In my view the full publication should cover everything and thee is
no need to cite this study

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I have no competing interests.