Reviewer's report

Title: A phase II study evaluating neo-/adjuvant EIA chemotherapy, surgical resection and radiotherapy in high-risk soft tissue sarcoma

Version: 5 Date: 20 October 2011

Reviewer: David Roberge

Reviewer's report:

Summary

The authors have addressed the comments of both reviewers. The work, although not practice-changing and reflective of a soon defunct era of sarcoma treatment, it is meritorious of publication.

Following are minor comments. Most notable is a need for further clarification of the statistics of the trial. Such work — where sample size is based on caseload and not a clear objective is pragmatic but prone to ambiguous results.

Comments

Minor Essential Revisions

Background

Page 4 – the local control is excellent with 50Gy of pre-operative radiation, thus “>=50Gy” may be more reflective of clinical practice than “>60Gy”

Page 7 – statistics – seeing as the statistics of this trial were pragmatic (how many patients can we accrue in 5 years), it should still be calculated what the expected outcomes were and what was the power of the trial to detect a difference from these expected outcomes, what results would have been considered “positive” and lead to further investigation of this strategy.

Results

Page 8 – “Tumor size was <5 cm (as a result of a previous, non-oncologic surgical procedure before study inclusion, 22%, n=11), 5-10 cm (40%, n=20) and >10 cm (38%, n=19).” I wonder if it would not be clearer (in the spirit of proper TNM staging), to simply report the size prior to any surgery and report the proportion of patients with incomplete pre-chemotherapy resection separately?

Page 9 — “Local recurrence occurred in 3 subjects (6%).” This appears to be potentially reported in a somewhat biased manner – were the 5 patients not undergoing surgery locally controlled?

Discretionary Revisions
Results

Page 9 – “14% of patients (7/50) suffered from nausea and vomiting (CTCAE grade #3).” the sentence should probably not start with a number

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 declare that I have no competing interests