Reviewer's report

Title: Estimates of cancer incidence, mortality and survival in Aboriginal people from NSW, Australia

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Reviewer: Judith S Jacobson

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This comparative study of cancer incidence, mortality, stage distribution, and survival in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations of New South Wales, Australia (NSW), is a potentially interesting and important addition to the literature on cancer in ethnic subpopulations. The audience for this paper, as well as that for BMC-Cancer, is not just Australian. For that reason, descriptive data, or at least a descriptive paragraph or two, on New South Wales and its Aboriginal population are needed.

Key features of the paper are its methods for dealing with missing data on aboriginality and its use of standardized incidence and mortality rates. The use of SIRs and SMRs implies that the denominator data needed for age standardized rates are not available for the Aboriginal population. Some explanation of the lack of denominator data is needed.

The paper says that the missingness of data on aboriginal status is not completely at random, and the imputation process takes known factors associated with aboriginal status into account. A little information about those known factors, especially health service area, would be helpful. A striking difference between the findings of this study and those of most ethnic comparative studies is that the aborigines seem to have higher rates across the board, with very few exceptions, than the NSW population, especially in older age groups. The Discussion mentions as a limitation possible misclassification among the cancer cases that do have aboriginal status data. It also mentions lack of access to health services, cultural bias against using conventional medicine, and pharmacogenomic factors that may affect response to treatment as possible explanations for the poor cancer outcomes observed among Aboriginal patients.

In general, the analyses appear competent, but without the background information, it is difficult to appreciate why the data are important and to determine what contribution the paper makes to the literature on cancer and ethnicity.

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.