Reviewer's report

Title: Is there a role of whole-body bone scan in patients with esophageal squamous cell carcinoma

Version: 2 Date: 4 June 2012

Reviewer: Li Wang

Reviewer's report:

- Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these.

In the Cover letter, the authors demonstrated that “The bone scan findings were not integrated into staging in the present study. For example, one patient had T3N1M0 disease by chest CT & EUS. He also had positive bone scan with confirmed bone metastasis. In the present study, his pretreatment clinical staging was stage IIIA, not stage IV.” This study method with the wrong disease staging increased the possibility of misleading the conclusion of the study because disease stage is a very important factor for prognosis. Also, Kato H, et al. already reported that “FDG-PET scans were superior to bone scintigraphy in detecting bony metastases of esophageal carcinomas” back to 2005. Thus, the authors need make the following changes for the publication purpose for this retrospective study:

1. The limitations of this work need to be clearly addressed in the discussion.
2. Bone scan status is a part of disease staging. Thus, disease stage should be a confounding factor to the roles that bone scan status played in prognosis predicting. Add the interaction statistic analysis between disease stage and bone scan status to the influence of the two study endpoints.

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 declare that I have no competing interests