Reviewer’s report

Title: Risk factors for nasal malignancies in German men - The South-German Nasal Cancer Study

Version: 1 Date: 22 May 2012

Reviewer: Martin Roosli

Reviewer’s report:

This is a case-control study on risk factors for nasal malignancies in German Men. The sample size is large compared to previous studies on this topic and the study is well conducted and analyzed. Thus, this study considerably increases our knowledge about nasal malignancy risk factors such as smoking, use of nasal snuff, hardwood dust, etc.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

It is striking that for quite a few risk factors (nasal snuff use, asbestos, organic solvent) an association was found in smokers but not in non-smokers. Such a pattern may either indicate the presence of residual confounding from smoking in the analysis or it may be due to an interaction mechanism between smoking and the corresponding risk factors. I encourage the authors to discuss this point.

Anyway, the discussion is mainly focused on a comparison with previous studies. There is also some overlap with the corresponding part in the introduction, which should be avoided. I recommend to shorten the literature review part in the discussion and to focus on the essential result patterns of previous studies. However, strengths and limitations of the present study as well as interpretation of the results should be discussed more extensively.

The conclusion of the abstract is very definitively formulated. I suggest using some softer terms like “evidence for” or “indications for new risk factors”, etc.

How controls were drawn from community residency registries should be explained in more detail. Was a dataset available representing the population at the date of diagnosis for each case? Or were controls drawn from the community residency registries, when the study was conducted? The latter approach is a limitation since it does not perfectly represent the population at risk. Had the researcher access to the registries or have controls selected by the community?

Discretionary Revisions

In the inclusion criteria for cases only the starting diagnosis date is given but not the end. This should be added.

Abstract line 10: a “to” should be removed
P. 4, line 12: It is not clear which risk factor the HR of 1.47 refers to.

P. 7: One could give more information about the cases who were not included in the study.

P. 9, line 8: OR of 1.90 and OR of 0.33 is not equal to the corresponding values in the table. I did not systematically check all values between text and table but I strongly recommend doing so.

Table 3: One may add that the reference is non-smokers. It is actually somewhat surprising that ex-smokers who quitted smoking 28+ years before have a smaller risk than non-smokers.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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