Reviewer's report

Title: Perceived Benefits and Barriers to Exercise for Recently Treated Patients with Multiple Myeloma: A Qualitative Study

Version: 2 Date: 11 February 2013

Reviewer: Joachim Wiskemann

Reviewer's report:

The current manuscript is an interesting paper on physical activity behavior and perceived benefits and barriers in multiple myeloma patients. The study was designed as a telephone-based interview study. Interviews in 24 patients were completed. Data were analyzed qualitatively according to the grounded theory approach using coding procedures based on the “constant comparison” method. It could be shown that myeloma patients reported physical activity as beneficial with regard to symptom control and treatment-related side effects. Furthermore, psychological benefits from exercising were reported. Due to the small sample size, missing reports on quantitative data, missing of subgroup-specific statements and a potential huge bias of initially (pre-treatment) highly physical active participants (see page 11) the practical and relevant results of the manuscript remains uncertain.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) Please report how many patients were written down for participation. How was the response rate? How many interviews could be completed and how many not?

2) It is crucial that detailed information on the stem cell transplant modality is missing. There are different treatment options (e.g.: autologous HSCT, tandem autologous HSCT and allogeneic HSCT). In particular for the allo setting major complications could be expected with regard to GvHD and other transplant-related complications. The complications may have a major impact on physical activity behavior.

3) Mandatory: More subgroup data/percentage data! E.g. page 13: “Almost all respondents felt that physical activity was beneficial to them. These benefits were reported as predominantly related to their recovery from treatment and coping with symptoms of MM as well as psychological benefits.” --> Please report percentage data here and review all sections in the manuscript and fill in quantitative data.

4) Please report on the influence of the variable “time since treatment completion” on the current physical activity behavior and the change between pre- and post-treatment (page 11). Further parameters like treatment, region and level of education should be taken into account.

5) Page 24: I think a RCT is not the right way to get more insight into the physical
activity behavior of MM patients. A bigger quantitative and systematic survey (with regard to include also inactive MM patients) is need.

Minor Essential Revisions:

6) The sections on page 8: “As a way of validating the codes, three interviews were independently coded to check the interpretations of the coder and validate the themes. There was agreement between both coders as to the dominant themes and their interpretation of the meaning from the ideas represented in the interviews.” Remains uncertain with regard to the numbers of coders and interviewers. Please write more clear sentences.

7) Page 8: Remove the sentence “The sample group was younger than the overall population of MM patients, whose mean age at diagnosis is 70 years [1].” This should be mentioned in the discussion part.

8) Page 9 (f): The n and % number in the same brackets looks a bit confusing. Sort them better by using a semicolon instead of a comma.

Discretionary Revisions:

9) Write 2-12 month instead of two-12 month (consequent spelling)

10) Page 8: “In the final stage,…..” should be a new paragraph or the paragraph above should be removed

11) Word count for all sections, table count and line count is missing

**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'