**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Influence of zoledronic acid on disseminated tumor cells in bone marrow and survival: results of a prospective clinical trial

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 20 May 2013

**Reviewer:** Jean-Yves Pierga

**Reviewer's report:**

This study is of importance as it shows a clinical impact of bisphophonates on survival in a population of patients selected on the presence of DTC in their bone marrow. The only clinical trial based on DTC as been more recently updated and should be discussed (Diel IJ, Jaschke A, Solomayer EF et al. Adjuvant oral clodronate improves the overall survival of primary breast cancer patients with micrometastases to the bone marrow: a long-term follow-up. Ann Oncol 2008; 19: 2007-2011.)

From a methodological point of view, why are patients with a follow-up under 8 months excluded. If these patients are lost for follow-up, then they are censored. I do not see the rationale justifying this arbitrary exclusion on this delay of 8 months. Could the authors provide the data with all included patients (96) as initially planned? They should provide a consort diagram with all the patients.

What were the hypotheses for the design of the trial to determine the number of patients to be included? The number of patients screened for DTC detection before inclusion should be given.

What are the results for survival according to DTC detection at 24 months?

**Minor comments:**


Page 5, last sentence should be modified, taking into account the Aft’s paper as first sentence page 13.

Beginning of page 8: was it a BM biopsy or a BM aspiration? idem page 11

Page 13: apoptosis of 99.9% of CT is a hypothesis and is not demonstrated. This should be mentioned.

Page 17 last paragraph should be revised: no references cited, number given (23 and 18) without link.

Table 1: median of DTC for positive cases (then range 1 to 6) or for all cases (this would be different from Solomayer’s 2012 paper.

Table 4: third column: yes instead of Ja?

Last figure is not useful and could be omitted.

First page: novartis and not norvartis

**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