Reviewer’s report

Title: Incidence and Outcome for Patients with Occult Lymph Node Involvement in T1 and T2 Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma: A prospective study

Version: 2 Date: 13 February 2014

Reviewer: Mohammad Mohammadianpanah

Reviewer’s report:

The authors reported the incidence of occult lymph node involvement and outcome of patients with early tongue cancer and investigated the role of elective neck dissection for clinically node negative early T stage disease. The manuscript has no new sound, however; the topic is interesting and this report is a good evidence for this topic. Overall, the article has been written and discussed fluently.

Major comments:
1. In the table 1, the rate of occult LN metastasis in T1 lesions is 9.3% (18/193) and not 5.5%. As well, the rate of occult LN metastasis in T2 lesions is 32% (43/134) and not 13.2%. Likewise, regarding the tumor grade, the rate of occult LN metastasis in grade 1, 2 and 3 will be 9.6%, 16.1% and 46.2% respectively. Accordingly, all percent values in the 3rd and the 4th columns needs to be revised. Furthermore, a column would be added to the table 1 for showing any statistical significance for these differences.

Minor comments:
2. In the text and the table 2 and 3, there is no clear which subcategories of the prognostic variables are associated with poor overall survival. For example, in the abstract and the text, patients’ age found to be a prognostic factor in univariate and multivariate analysis; however, there is no clear younger age or older age is associated with poor outcome? Therefore, in the table 2 and 3, subcategories of each (categorized) variable and their Hazard Ratio would be defined.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.