Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical approaches to treating papillary squamous cell carcinoma of the uterine cervix

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Reviewer: Edward Tanner

Reviewer's report:

The authors present a comprehensive review of PSCCs. They have addressed some of the most important issues surrounding these tumors: the rate of errant diagnosis with biopsy, the role of preoperative imaging, and long term prognosis. This will be an excellent contribution to the literature. There are just a few changes that need to be addressed:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Lines 183-188: The numbers in this paragraph don’t add up to me. Seven patients had no stromal invasion on MRI. How many of these actually had invasion? You don’t list this here. You then refer to six cases with stromal invasion on MRI. That adds up to 13 cases and you only have 12 total. This should be clarified. I would state how many patients had no invasion on MRI and then how many of these actually had invasion. I would then list how many patients with invasion on MRI had invasion on histologic analysis. Overall, this entire paragraph is difficult to read. It is a critical part of your manuscript and must be rewritten for clarity.

Lines 296-304: You have just described an algorithm for the management of PSCC. Why not go one step further and write out your algorithm in a flow diagram with decision points? This would be tremendously helpful and potentially raise the interest of this article to the level of seminal article on the topic.

You have not addressed how the diagnosis of PSCC was changed in the 16 cases with an initial diagnosis of PSCC. What was it about these cases that led to the change? Is this an issue of not sampling enough of the tumor or are there other factors influencing the change in diagnosis? You could discuss in your results or just mention in your discussion but the issue must be addressed. Also, it will help your colleagues understand the importance of surgical staging. I think that this really highlights the differences in management of these tumors in Japan versus US/Europe as more extensive sampling or surgical management would be considered in these areas if more extensive sampling could confirm the more indolent nature of true PSCCs.

Minor Essential Revisions

Lines 66-68: This sentence is incomplete. It should be reworded after the comma to construct a complete sentence.
Lines 80-83: This is a great point. You have identified several unanswered questions in the literature. Could you please separate out the statements about lymph node metastasis and the role of minimally invasive surgery into two sentences? As written, this sentence is too long and needs to be separated to highlight the uniqueness of your report.

Lines 114-115: This statement is unnecessary as we would expect as much. I would consider replacing this with a comment that fertility preservation was considered in patients desiring fertility and when cervix confined disease was identified (or whatever criteria you used).

Lines 165-167: This statement is awkward and a bit misleading. I believe that you are saying that several of the tumors were smaller or non-invasive on final pathology. I would consider separating these out according to how they were down-staged. For example, three were downstaged due to lack of stromal invasion, two due to tumor size, etc.

Line 276-278: This is an extremely helpful conclusion. You need to follow this up with a comment about the role of MRI in preoperative assessment. In my opinion, this suggests that MRI can be used to evaluate patients that may be excellent candidates for fertility preservation therapy. I see that you include this in your conclusion paragraph but it should also be stated here as it is an important point.

Discretionary Revisions
Line 71: Perhaps you could use a more specific term than “surgical methods” here? Do you mean a diagnostic surgical procedure or definitive surgery? In other words, do you mean hysterectomy, excisional biopsy, or both?

Lines 161-162: I would rewrite as: “In four of these cases, no tumor was apparent on MRI.”

Line 179: You can eliminate the “with or without” as it is implied by the definition of accuracy.

Line 210: This statement is unnecessary. Perhaps you mean to say that it has been rarely reported?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

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