Reviewer's report

Title: Multimodal therapy in treatment of rectal cancer is associated with improved survival and reduced local recurrence - a retrospective analysis over two decades

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Reviewer: John Monson

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written paper but documents improving outcomes for patients with rectal cancer using multi modality therapy - effective chemoradiotherapy and adjuvant chemotherapy set alongside appropriate imaging and high quality surgical excision. The results are entirely consistent with worldwide experience and as such there is really nothing new in this paper which is its major weakness alongside not being a controlled study. I have a number of comments which the authors should address:

- The authors describe it as a population-based study which of course it is not - it is a simple uncontrolled retrospective case series.
- as the authors note this paper, alongside other publications, suggests that multimodal therapy improves outcomes. It is hard to identify which factor - surgery, radiation or chemo radiotherapy for example - might generate the greatest contribution to the improvement. This is an extremely difficult question to answer but it should be at least addressed in the discussion

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