Reviewer’s report

Title: Worldwide Trends in Mortality from Biliary Tract Malignancies

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Reviewer: Mr Max Bulsara

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

Issues to consider:

1. Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown: if not, what are the shortcomings and could they be overcome?

What method was used for age-standardization? Why did the author use 1970 World population as the Standard population? The year ranges from 1970 to 1998, perhaps 1984 would have been better. The use of Estimated Annual Percent Change (EAPC) alone may not tell us the whole story. There are problems associated with its use. The calculation of EAPC assumes that there is a constant rate of increase or decrease over the whole calendar period. It is not clear if this assumption is valid. Straight-line model fit to the log of the mortality rate may not adequately pick up any dramatic change in direction of the rate. It is well known that Rates are prone to extra variation (over-dispersion within geographical regions and between geographical regions) and hence appropriate models (Poisson regression) need to be fitted in order to make inferences from the data.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing? YES but the statistical test may not be appropriate to investigate significant trends.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition: if not, in what ways? YES, the table is adequate and the graphs are clear but would like to see error bars.

4. Is the writing acceptable? YES

Competing interests:

None declared.