Reviewer's report

Title: Phase I/II study of first-line irinotecan combined with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid Mayo Clinic schedule in patients with advanced colorectal cancer

Version: 1 Date: 11 February 2004

Reviewer: Ewald Woell

Reviewer's report:

General
In this well designed Phase I/II trial the authors report the toxicity and efficacy of a bolus 5-FU regimen (Mayo Clinic schedule) combined with irinotecan in patients with advanced colorectal cancer. The data presented are sound and well balanced. The conclusions drawn are comprehensible and adequately supported by the data presented. The quality of data presentation is high especially concerning the exact infusion time of 5-FU which is crucial since bolus and infusional regimens differ substantially in their side effects. This fact is also shown in this trial.

Response rate and time to progression are comparable to other Phase II and III trials combining 5FU/FA and irinotecan. Overall survival however is lower which, as the authors conclude, may be due to the comparatively low dose of irinotecan administered. This is an important finding and supports the use of infusional 5FU/FA regimens in combination with irinotecan.

In conclusion this paper presents valuable information is well written and I therefore recommend this paper for publication in BMC Cancer.

Discretionary Revisions:
As in other bolus 5-FU regimens combined with irinotecan one drawback of this study is the high rate of early deaths (6%) in the Phase II part. A possible explanation for this fact may be the amount of patients with a WHO performance status of 2 (4 patients in the Phase II part as compared to 0 patients in the Phase I part). For this reason it would be interesting to know if the early deaths reported occurred in the group of patients with a bad performance status.

The term "Median time from metastasis diagnosis (range) months" in table one is misleading and should be clarified.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None