Reviewer's report

Title: Role of axillary sentinel lymph node biopsy in patients with pure ductal carcinoma in situ

Version: 2 Date: 20 December 2004

Reviewer: Andrew Spillane

Reviewer's report:

General
The paper is well written and easy to read.
It is a topic of interest and a reasonable sized study population. This is an extremely low risk population with 53% <= 1cm.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

More discussion of the reported higher false negative rate for SNB after Excision biopsy up to 15 % in the NSABP B32 study presented in San Antonio, but also published by others.

More acknowledgement that this was a low risk population of patients and that there is a grey area with larger areas of DCIS and palpable DCIS where micro-invasion is more likely. The paper should be more focused on pointing out that the low risk DCIS doesn't need SNB.

It has to be clearly documented how many of these cases were palpable.

There was about 27% of the study group who had a mastectomy which is one group the authors still say should have a SNB. I don't know they should form part of the study group because of this but it is debatable and not a major issue.

The mean number of sentinel nodes is presumably < 2 which is lower than most series. Given this and the high number of Excision biopsies for diagnosis the robustness of the low node positivity rate is debatable.

Was the positive lymph node a peripheral sinus deposit? How big was it? This should be documented and if it is a small peripheral sinus deposit tumour translocation by biopsy should be discussed.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Page 3. Para 2. "... is object of controversy." replace with ".....is controversial."

just to clarify the point the FNA doesn't diagnose DCIS - it helps to confirm the radiological diagnosis.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential 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:

I declare that I have no competing interests