Reviewer's report

Title: Minimum follow-up time required for the estimation of statistical cure of cancer patients: verification using data from 42 cancer sites in the SEER database

Version: 2 Date: 12 January 2005

Reviewer: Angela Mariotto

Reviewer's report:

General

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

1. It is still not clear in the paper if the authors a) used throughout the article data from only Connecticut and Detroit and if these results are consistent with results from the SEER-9 registries or b) if they used Detroit and Connecticut to test lognormality and the main results were based on SEER-9 data.

If a) they should state it at the beginning of data sources.

6. The authors changed the estimates of Cervix Uteri in Table 2. In the previous version CSSR(tau) was 92.7 and now is 69.7% closer to the 20-year relative survival rate of 61%, however still higher. Relative survival and cause specific survival are two different measures of cancer survival in the absence of other causes (net survival). Relative survival is used because cause of death information might report the site of metastasis instead of the primary site. Neither cause-specific or relative survival are gold standard. The cumulative relative survival of cervix uteri after 20 years from diagnosis still shows a decrease. This indicates that even after 20 years cervix uteri patients still present some extra risk of death compared to the general population. The authors should include in the discussion limitations of cause-specific survival.

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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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