Reviewer's report

Title: Familial female breast cancer: characteristics and outcome of BRCA 1-2 positive and negative cases.

Version: 2 Date: 12 February 2005

Reviewer: Fabio Puglisi

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General
The paper by Veronesi et al describes the tumor phenotype and clinical characteristics in a series of patients with familial breast cancer with known BRCA status. Comparisons between BRCA positive and BRCA wild type patients were made in the attempt to identify some prognostic differences. Although the study has some limitations (small sample size, retrospective design), it adds important information on this topic.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The "retrospective" design of the study should be clear also in the abstract;
2. The statistical methods should be described more in detail and "p-values" instead of "NS" should be reported;
3. I would suggest to quote the related review by Nicoletto MO et al (Cancer Treatment Reviews, 2001);
4. The absence of statistically significant phenotype differences (with the exception of tumor grade) between BRCA positive and BRCA wild type groups should be due to the preponderance of BRCA-2 cases. This observation should be discussed.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. For better clarity, I would suggest to report eligibility criteria for BRCA testing in a table;

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