Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 9 March 2005

Reviewer: Silvia Franceschi

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors of the present article address an interesting question: i.e., whether the detection of BRCA 1/2 affects the prognosis of women with a family history of breast cancer. The study is well designed, but the study population too small to detect but a large difference in prognosis. The authors should better acknowledge this limitation in the Discussion. Other than that, the article is well written and the conclusions well balanced. I suggest, however, some modifications/additions, mainly in the statistical analysis.

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Minor essential revisions
1) Methods: Please add the calculation of hazard ratios (adjusted at least for age in single or two-year groups, and tumour grade). These are useful to appreciate that: 1) The statement at the end of Discussion (â€œspecific protective effect of BRCA positivityâ€) is not true and should be deleted; and 2) the 95% confidence intervals of the hazard ratios are very broad.
2) Methods: Median survival (180 months) seems to me inappropriate, as the follow up period for the study patients is much shorter than 180 months. Please give the average and range of the follow up period. I am also uncertain about â€œprojected survivalâ€. Please justify or delete.
3) Discussion, line 9: no â€œsporadic casesâ€ are included in the present article. Please clarify.
4) Table 1: Please add range and interquartile distribution of age and details about follow up duration.
5) Figures I and II: Please give hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals in the figures and in the text.

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Discretionary Revisions
1) Conclusions: They could be deleted for brevity sake.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare no competing interests.