Reviewer's report

Title: Nerve tolerance to high-dose-rate brachytherapy in patients with soft tissue sarcoma: a retrospective study

Version: 1 Date: 3 May 2005

Reviewer: Rafael Martinez-Monge

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)

Page 3, line 6: The sentence: "are valuable for challenging limb-preserving..." is misleading. Please explain this statement.
Page 4, line 3 & Page 10, Conclusions: "are challenging limb-preserving surgery..." is misleading. Please explain what you are trying to say.
Page 5, line 14: "microscopic residual lesions were intentionally left". How can microscopic extensions intentionally left behind? Taking into account that only one patient had positive margins. Did you have any frozen section that came back positive and you decided not to proceed any further with the resection? Please explain.
Material and Methods & Table 2: Negative margins. How did you define negative margins? 20mm? 10mm? 1mm? any measurement different from positive? Please define and give the exact measurement of the margin at the neurovascular bundle for each patient.
Page 6, line 4: "The point of dose prescription". Was the dose prescribed at a single point? at a number of points? at a plane? Did you follow any defined prescription system, Paris, Quimby, New York, ICRU 58? Please clarify.
Page 6, line 9: "Treatment were given twice a day". Please define daily interfraction interval.
Page 8, line 15 and following: "severity and duration". Brachytherapy-related complications are not necessarily less severe or shorter in duration compared with EBRT. There are not randomized trials available to prove this statement. Please rewrite this sentence in more conservative terms.
Page 10, line 1: "tolerance of peripheral nerves to LDR brachytherapy maight be higher than to EBRT". Same as before. This has not been proven in any randomized trial. Please rewrite this sentence in more conservative terms.

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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)

General throughout the text: Please have your manuscript reviewed by someone with a thorough command of the English language. There are sentences in the text that may be misleading to the readers.

Page 2, line 5: The term "rigidly" may be misleading. I would suggest to change that term by i.e, "properly"....
Page 2, line 7: The expression "intimately associated" may be misleading. I would suggest to change that expression by "in contact"
Page 2, line 8: The expression "neurovascular bundle-involving" reads better as: "involving the
neurovascular bundle"

Page 2, line 11: The expression "with a surgical margin of 5 positive and one negative" is incorrect. I would suggest for example "with five cases of negative margins and one case with positive margins"

Page 3, line 4: "Finding" should be "findings"

Page 4, line 2: "May be generally advised" may not reflect routine practice in many centers. I would change to "may be sometimes advised".

Page 4, line 10: "Mechanical Trauma". This should be deleted. ABS guidelines and routine practice mandates not to place the catheters directly over the exposed nerve.

Page 4, line 16-17: "intimately associated". Same as above.

Page 5, line 2: "neurovascular bundle-involving" Same as above.

Page 6, line 2: Did you secure the catheters into the tumor bed? Sometimes they move during wound closure.

Page 9, line 11: "LDL". Please change to LDR.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'