Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence of metastatic disease after pre- and postoperative radiation therapy in primary high grade and large soft tissue sarcomas

Version: 1 Date: 22 February 2006

Reviewer: Rolf D. D Issels

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors reviewed retrospectively the clinical outcome of 41 patients with primary STS of extremity (high grade, deep and size > 8 cm) as a subgroup among a total of 233 STS patients. Either preoperative (n=8 pts) or postoperative (n=33 pts) irradiation (RTX) with no further systemic chemotherapy was administered. Beside local control and survival parameters the analysis is focussed on the incidence of metastatic disease dependent on the timing of RTX and related factors.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Due to the limited total number of evaluable pts and small sample size for comparison (e.g. pre-RTX) no firm conclusion should be drawn upon the relevance of these factors on outcome. In addition, selection bias for pre- vs. post-RTX might have a major influence (e.g. was initial irresectability independent of size of the tumor included for the therapeutic decision?). The ms should be rewritten as an detailed and valid institutional analysis for high-risk STS (n=41) of extremities with poor outcome. The emphasis should be on the need of other multimodal treatment concepts (e.g. (neo)adjuvant) based on published results.

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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)

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