Reviewer's report

Title: Age-related differences in the clinical management of women with metastatic breast cancer

Version: 1 Date: 9 January 2006

Reviewer: Manoj Pandey

Reviewer's report:

General
Manders et al retrospectively reviewed cancer registry data to evaluate the age related differences in clinical management of women with metastatic breast cancer. It is a common notion that the treatment to the elderly is not same as that to young ones. However, there is very little literature either for or against this argument. The main reason is to isolate the effect of age from other factors like performance status, stage of disease etc. This study too suffers from the same. The authors have not reported on performance status of the women, making it difficult to interpret the data weather these differences were due to age alone or were due to poor performance status of these women.

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

The authors should also report there results for single verses multiple metastasis, site of the metastasis etc. so as to enable one to understand that the differences are solely due to age and not otherwise.
The study also suffers from small sample size with only 20 women over 70 year of age. Hence further reducing the number in subgroup analysis and reducing the power of the study.
The data should be presented in absolute numbers. Actually more women in 50-69 group have T4 lesions than women in >70 group the difference in percentage is due to small denominator.
There are some errors in data in table 1 age 50-69 T3 1% with only 62 women in the group how one subgroup can have 1%? It is better to give absolute number rather percentage

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

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 of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'