Reviewer’s report

Title: Health Profiles of 996 Melanoma Survivors

Version: 2 Date: 29 November 2005

Reviewer: E Crocetti

Reviewer’s report:

The aim of the study was to compare the long-term health effect in malignant melanoma adult survivors (overall and according to treatment, surgery only and combined treatments) in comparison with other cancers adult survivors.

Most of the results that compare melanoma with other cancers refer to well known epidemiologic differences between melanoma and other cancers, e.g. age-specific incidence curves, different prognosis, etc. and seem poorly informative.

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

The study refers to patients from the M.D. Anderson’s case series who fit the inclusion criteria and answered the postal questionnaire. It is a strongly selected case series (e.g. 97.9% white Americans; 11.6% melanoma in the analysed survey vs. 6% among 27-year prevalence in SEER ). This should be clearly stated across the paper starting from the title.

Sub-groups are different according to age at diagnosis and age at survey. Most of the analysed health problems are age-related (e.g. cataracts, arthritis, etc). The effect of age should be considered in the statistical analysis to disentangle ageing from cancer effect.

The multi comparisons in table 4,5,6 do seem not really useful, compared numbers may be small and the possible inflation of alfa error is not taken into account.

Other questions:

When the survey has been carried out?

Why e-mail data have been collected but not used? Did you compare mailed and e-mailed answers/patients?

How many patients answered the questionnaire? Do you know the reason for not answering?

How did you collect information on the effect of cancer on family and intimate relationships? There were specific questions or just blank spaces for personal comments?

How did you collect information on the effect of cancer on overall health

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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)
Pg. 8 Figure 1 does not show sex comparison
Pg. 8 ethnicity did not mention in material and methods

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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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare I have no competing interests