Reviewer's report

Title: Disease-specific survival for limited-stage small-cell lung cancer affected by statistical method of assessment

Version: 6 Date: 28 August 2006

Reviewer: Joanna Moschandreas

Reviewer’s report:

General
The revised version of the text, in which detailed descriptions of the statistical modelling techniques used are provided, is much improved. I have some minor comments below.

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

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Response to comment 5.
Table 3. Add the numbers of patients in each group.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Response to comment 1.
As the same patients were used and the Kaplan-Meier analysis is also presented in the present paper, I suggest that the sentences about validation are deleted.

Response to comment 9 (and minor comment 2).
My comment about the lack of information on important predictors was based on the text on page 8 (2nd para) where it is written that “due to incomplete data...we were unable to examine...type of chemotherapy, use of radiotherapy...TNM stage....”. If the information is in fact available, could these factors not be considered at least in univariate analyses?

Response to comment 11.
In the reference cited, Chapman et al found that in breast cancer the proportional hazards assumptions of the Cox model did not hold. Here, there is no such issue. Perhaps the fact that although both models seem adequate the estimated survival curves appear to differ to a substantial extent (nicely illustrated in Figure 1), could be further emphasized in the text. Given also that when considered overall, the confidence intervals for the 3-year estimates do not overlap.

What next?: Accept after discretionary 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 that I have no competing interests.