Reviewer's report

Title: Gemcitabine versus gemcitabine based combination chemotherapy in advanced pancreatic cancer - Indirect comparison

Version: 1 Date: 28 November 2007

Reviewer: Stefan Boeck

Reviewer's report:

General

This well written paper reports an interesting and (to date) unique statistical approach for an adjusted indirect comparison of gemcitabine-containing combination chemotherapy regimens in advanced pancreatic cancer. Although the authors did not find a significant superiority of a particular combination, this topic is of clinical relevance. Especially a head-to-head comparison of gemcitabine + platinum regimens versus gemcitabine + capecitabine regimens is of clinical and scientific interest. The authors also describe the main limitations of their approach (p. 6).

The paper fulfils the main style requirements for publication in BMC Cancer.

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

None

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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)

1. Ref. [2] has been published as a full paper in Annals of Oncology (Epub ahead of print) in the meantime: the author should therefore revise the introduction and also the discussion section by including the data from this trial (a randomised phase II study including a comparison of a gemcitabine + capecitabine regimen versus a modified gemcitabine + oxaliplatin regimen)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Perhaps the title of the paper should be changed to "Gemcitabine based combination chemotherapy in advanced pancreatic cancer - indirect comparison" as this is the main topic of the article.

2. A HR of 1.17 (although with a wide 95% CI) in favour of gem + cap over gem + 5-FU is interesting. Perhaps the authors would like to (shortly) discuss this observation with regard to a possible higher clinical activity for an oral
fluoropyrimidine compared to infusional 5-FU in advanced pancreatic cancer.

3. Ref. [3] and [5]: Incorrect citation; only volume, but not number of the journal issue is cited.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests