Reviewer's report

Title: A family history of breast cancer will not predict female early onset breast cancer in a population-based setting

Version: 2 Date: 1 April 2008

Reviewer: Harvey Murff

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  No major comments

- Minor Essential Revisions
  1) The authors repeatedly stress that the sample is unselected however this is actually not the case as cases diagnosed after the age of 70 were excluded. This would likely have the effect of removing late-onset cases which might be more likely to be “sporadic”. If this is the case then the predictive values may even be overstated. I do not think the impact of this age exclusion really needs to be discussed however I would alter the language regarding the population being completely unselected.

  2) There are many important finding in the paper and the “risk score” could be potentially useful for a general population. I think the authors are de-emphasizing the importance of the results by over-focusing on the positive predictive value. Quite frankly any test, no matter how good the test characteristics will have a low PPV if the disease is rare in the general population. As such the risk score might be more valuable in identifying individuals who are at increased risk and might benefit from alternative forms of screening.

Discretionary Revisions
  1) If space permits would report hazard ratios within Abstract

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'