Reviewer's report

Title: The impact of comorbidity and stage on ovarian cancer mortality: A nationwide Danish cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 12 October 2007

Reviewer: René Scheiden

Reviewer's report:

GENERAL:

The paper presents a population-based data report on patients suffering from ovarian cancer diagnosed between 1995 and 2003. The impact of comorbidity and stage on mortality were analysed. It is the strength of the present cohort study that data from 5,213 patients, collected at a nationwide level, were used.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS:

As mentioned in the title of the manuscript, the study focused on comorbidity, tumour-stage and mortality.

- The authors state that “comorbidity is an important predictor of prognosis in patients with chronic diseases including cancer” and that “among women with ovarian cancer, the presence of comorbidity may substantially influence the diagnostic work-up, after treatment efficacy and affect survival”. Analysing the results of the present study, these statements are absolutely justified. Because, comorbidity is a central parameter in this study, it seems important and necessary to define more precisely in the “Methods-chapter cf. page 7, line 3 and page 7, line 7-9”, the terms of “moderate and severe comorbidity” and give for each category as many as possible examples issued from the Danish Hospital Discharge Registry.

- Also for those who are not experts in this field it might be of interest to define the terms “absolute survival and relative mortality rate ratios (MMRs)”.

- The authors state that the Danish Cancer Registry also contains information on histological types (page 6, line 4). Why was it not possible to separate FIGO-stage II from FIGO-stage III tumours? (cf. page 5, line 19-20).

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS:

page 5, line 22: tumours with regional “pelvic” spread...


page 9, line 12+13: Among patients with severe comorbidity, 42% had distant metastases/FIGO IV, compared to 28% of patients without comorbidity.

In table 1, line 19; Distant metastases/FIGO IV //
comorbidity 0:27% versus comorbidity 3+:38%?

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS:

page 4, line 14-17: However…
The two sentences are not important in the context of the present study. I would delete them.

page 5, line 5+6: Use of date…
This sentence should be part of the “Method chapter”, perhaps in a paragraph with a statement on the different histological types of ovarian cancers evaluated in the present study (cf. WHO classification) at page 6, line 4

page 5, line 19: Since we could not classify tumours with regional spread as either FIGO-stage II or III tumours… we used …
Why?

page 12, line 2+3: When applied to administrative data, misclassifications of comorbidity may occur [32].
Why?

page 12, line 6: However, since comorbidity was independently recorded before the cancer diagnosis …
Since when?

page 14, line 2: This may explain …
This may also explain …

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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