Reviewer's report

Title: Chemoradiotherapy and Consolidation Chemotherapy with Cisplatin and 5-fluorouracil in Anal Squamous Cell Carcinoma: Long-term results in 31 patients

Version: 4 Date: 1 August 2007

Reviewer: Prajnan Das

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a well-written retrospective study on 31 patients treated with 5-FU/cisplatin-based chemoradiation for squamous cell anal cancer.

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

1. The title should state "Chemoradiotherapy with or without consolidation chemotherapy ...", since only some patients received consolidation chemotherapy.

2. There appears to be an inconsistency between the abstract and the body of the manuscript regarding the dose of radiotherapy. The abstract states that patients received 45 Gy, including a 9 Gy boost. The Methods section states that patients received 54 Gy. The Methods section also states that 54 Gy was administered to the pelvis, perineum and both inguinal areas. The authors should clarify whether this was indeed the case, or whether these regions got only the initial dose of 45 Gy. Also, the Results section indicates that the maximum dose of radiation was 64.8 Gy, which is not consistent with the Methods section.

3. The Methods section states that a boost of 9 Gy was given to responders. Figure 2 suggests that all patients had some response (either CR or PR). Could the authors clarify whether a boost was given to patients with any response (CR+PR) or only to those with CR?

4. I suggest including more details in the Introduction and Discussion sections about the three published randomized trials on chemoradiation for anal cancer (Refs 5-7).

5. The Discussion should discuss results from the recently presented RTOG 98-11 trial.

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. Introduction, second paragraph – The authors should specify which RTOG trial they are referring to.

2. Methods, page 11, last paragraph: The word ‘delay’ should be replaced by the
word ‘interval’.

3. Discussion, page 24: Instead of stating that there are several trials, I suggest that the authors state which trials are investigating this issue.

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:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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