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: 28 September 2007

Reviewer: Andreas Meyer

Reviewer's report:

General

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

1. Page 8: There have been treated only very few patients (n=31) in a period of 11 years. Have there been more patients treated with other chemotherapeutics or without any?
2. Page 9: Have the lymph nodes been irradiated in all patients up to a dose of 54 Gy?
3. Page 11: Definition of disease-free survival: “defined from the date of negative biopsy to recurrence of cancer or death”: Have also the 3 patients, who have died due to other reasons than anal cancer also censored using this definition? Than the statistics would be wrong.
4. Page 14: Maximum dose of 64,8 Gy: What have been the reasons to treat patients with concurrent chemotherapy and a total dose of 64,8 Gy?
5. Page 16: “This patient received re-irradiation as salvage treatment”. Why has this patient not been treated with salvage surgery?
6. Page 17: “5 of 8 deaths were due to anal cancer”: Have these patients died due to distant metastases or local recurrences? Have surgical salvage therapy been applied to one of these patients?
7. Page 19: “have retained normal anal function”: Have you measured the anal function or have you used a questionnaire?
8. Page 21: Are the results of the study due to consolidation therapy or due to the chemotherapeutic cisplatin because no statistically significant difference could be observed if these two groups were compared.
9. Page 25 – 31, Literature: There are only few references from this century, and the studiis from this century deal with other tumor entities although there are some interesting studies dealing with anal cancer and cisplatin from this century. Additionally the very important phase III trial of the RTOG 98-11 is not cited although this trial deals with cisplatin and neoadjuvant chemotherapy!

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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. Figure 1: The quality of the figure should be enhanced.

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: 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