Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of age, leukocyte count and day 21-bone marrow response to chemotherapy on long term outcome of children with Philadelphia Chromosome-Positive Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in the pre-Imatinib era: results of the FRALLE 93 study

Version: 1 Date: 13 October 2008

Reviewer: Vaskar Saha

Reviewer’s report:

Summary:

The authors report on the outcome of 36 children with Ph+ ALL diagnosed between 1993-99 treated on the FRALLE 93 study. 26 children achieved CR at the end of induction and 7 more after a subsequent pulse of Therapy. An overall DFS of 42% is reported, with age, presenting white cell count and a D21 marrow being medicine of outcome.

Major compulsory revision

(i) it is difficult to follow what exactly happened. Of the 10 non-responders, 7 were transplanted. What were the outcomes of these non-responders? The abstract states that 13 of the 26 children with CR underwent an allogenic transplant. However page 8, paragraph 1 suggests that of the 13 allogenic SCTs, 6 were performed in the 7 non-responders. I would suggest a detail table listing each patient and their outcome or a CONSORT type flow diagram is constructed so the reader can follow the text. This will also get rid of the rambling description.

(ii) There is a difference in outcome between the two induction regimens, and the difference is related to both asparaginase and anthracycline usage. This difference may not be statistically significant due to the small numbers or due to the statistical tests used. No mention of what statistical tests have been used are given in either methods or results section.

Minor essential revision

(i) Page 8, paragraph 3. Table 2 not Table 1
(ii) Delete line 3-4 page 9. “The results of DFS…” This has already been stated in the previous line and can be inferred in Figure 1.

Overall this article will be of value to Clinicians. However it needs some re-writing so it is easier to follow.

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