Reviewer's report

Title: Ethnicity and incidence of Hodgkin lymphoma in Canadian population

Version: 3 Date: 13 January 2009

Reviewer: Lindsay M Morton

Reviewer's report:

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS:
The revisions to the background section do indeed help to state more clearly that the purpose of the analysis was to investigate the association between HL risk and ethnicity, medical history, and pesticide exposure, but a clear rationale for combining these three risk factors in particular is still missing. This is essential, given that these factors are not typically thought of as being related. This link would also be strengthened by commenting on the difference between univariate and multivariate results.

The authors have added several references in their expansion of the background, but do not always clearly indicate the relevance of each reference to the current analysis. For example, reference 11 is stated to compare the occurrence of HL among various Asian populations, but no conclusions from that study are mentioned. Reference 13 is stated to indicate a genetic predisposition to HL, but it compares HL in two regions on Asia, which could also have different environmental exposures.

The authors state that they included the word "matched" in front of "case-control design" to justify the use of conditional logistic regression. However, conditional logistic regression is for individually-matched studies, not frequency matched. Further clarification of the methods is necessary, particularly since controls were "matched" to the entire case group (HL, NHL, MM, STS), but only HL cases are included in this analysis. I am guessing the controls were individually matched to the entire case group (+/- 2 years), but then stratified not on case set, but instead on age and province to reflect the use of the entire control group but only one set of cases.

All results should be mentioned first in the results section, rather than discussion (e.g., page 12).

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.