Reviewer's report

**Title:** Does Colon Cancer Ever Metastasize to Bone First? A Temporal Analysis of Colorectal Cancer Progression.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 11 May 2009

**Reviewer:** Bert H O'Neil

**Reviewer’s report:**

Major compulsory revisions

Overall, this was a good project for a medical student, but the quality of the manuscript suggests insufficient mentoring on this project. The paper is interesting, but requires extensive revision for clarity.

I have difficulty understanding the meaning of the times to development of lung and bone mets stated in the results. This is partly due to the fact that the fraction of patients who had serial PET scans is never noted. Also the group appears to be heterogeneous in terms of when in their disease course they were referred for PET. If all times were based on ascertainment of the initial time of diagnosis, this needs to be stated in the methods.

A large number of patients included in the ‘n’ are non-informative because they never experienced recurrence at all. What is the point of including this mix of patient stages? I would suggest calling the denominator the number of patients who presented with or subsequently developed metastatic disease.

Minor essential revisions

Abstract- The results section does not make sense and needs to be revised. Beginning with the abstract, the use of the term “pure” throughout the paper is inaccurate and should be changed to a better descriptor such as “isolated”

Methods- statistical methods need to be more detailed, for example do not account for Kaplan-Meier statistics.

Also, stage at presentation and surgical therapy needs to be presented in table form in the results.

On page 7, beginning on the 7th line from the bottom, sentence beginning “Lung to bone took…” Please revise this sentence for clarity.

**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