Reviewer's report

Title: Metastatic renal cell cancer treatments: An indirect comparison meta-analysis

Version: 3 Date: 28 December 2008

Reviewer: Paul Elson

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Minor Essential Revisions:

1. The p-value for the indirect comparison of sorafenib and bevacizumab based on the trials using placebos as the comparator is given as .04 in the abstract versus .23 in the second to last sentence of the results section.

2. Second paragraph of Page 10 - The authors use reference #8 (Motzer, NEJM 2007) in their discussion of full length reports that used interferon as the comparator; however it is also referenced as being one of the trials that used a placebo.

3. First paragraph of the discussion (page 12) - The authors indicate that their study demonstrates a consistent progression-free survival benefit for new VEGF-targeted therapies, with decreased adverse event profiles compared to IL-2 and IFN-alpha; however the investigators did not compare adverse events and IL-2 was not a comparator in any of the trials evaluated.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. The X-axis scale for Figures 2, 3, and 5 are "uneven" in the sense that half-unit increments are used to the left of 1 but full-unit increments are used to the right. There is nothing inherently wrong with this; however it might confuse some readers if they do not pay attention to the difference since the confidence intervals for the "non-significant" comparisons sometimes do not appear to extend beyond 1 as much as one might expect given the associated p-value. For example for the indirect comparison of sorafenib and bevacizumab in Figure 5, the confidence interval just barely extends to the right of 1; however the associated p-value reported in the results is .23. The authors may want to consider using values such as 1.5, 2, 2.5, and 3 rather than 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests