Reviewer’s report

Title: Survival of cancer patients treated with mistletoe extract (Iscador): a systematic literature review

Version: 1 Date: 22 April 2009

Reviewer: Ronald Grossarth-Maticek

Reviewer’s report:

In their article „Survival of cancer patients treated with mistletoe extract (Iscador): a systematic literature review“ the authors present a meta-analysis on survival time of cancer patients treated with Iscador, a anthroposophical mistletoe extract from Viscum album.

The authors clearly describe the basics of mistletoe research and explain the state of the art in treating cancer patients with mistletoe extracts. They also explain the line of reasoning why they have specialized their meta-analysis on Iscador, which to date to my knowledge has not been carried out before and give the reader a short summary about other extracts based on Viscum album. Moreover, the were able to extract data to calculate hazard ratios and their standard errors, and thus were able to compare heterogeneous study results

There are however some minor concerns which should be worked out more precisely by the authors:

1. The description of the search strategy is a bit short and could be a bit more detailed. I.e. I could not follow the abbreviations NLM, DIMDI which to my knowledge are not single databases but already cover databases like MEDLINE, which is also refered to. Also NCCAM does not sound to be a database.
2. The authors should explain, what they mean by “actively controlled trials” (section “statistical analysis”)
3. They also state that “the reporting of the results adhered, if possible and appropriate, to the MOOSE guidelines“. Although I have an impression what could be meant, it would be better to briefly describe this to the reader.
4. They state that they have extraxted “Outcome(s)” of the study. Do they mean survival time? If so, this should be specified.
5. With respect to their statistical analysis, they should discuss their findings compared to other actual systematic reviews on mistletoe.