Reviewer's report

Title: Time trends in breast cancer incidence and mortality in a middle-sized northeastern Brazilian city

Version: 1 Date: 13 March 2012

Reviewer: Robin J Bell

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:
The English expression in this manuscript is poor. It needs extensive editing for grammatical errors.

This paper is reporting that in an area in the North East of Brazil, there has been an increase in the age-standardised incidence and mortality from breast cancer. The data in table 1 includes annual data for both incidence and mortality presented both in a crude and age-adjusted fashion. There is clearly substantial variation from one year to the next as the absolute numbers of cases involved are not large. The age-adjusted estimates in this table would be better presented with confidence intervals so that the uncertainty around the point estimates can be appreciated.

Then a joinpoint analysis has been carried out. The only annual percentage change from this analysis where the 95% confidence interval does not include zero is the one for annual percentage change in age adjusted incidence, both overall and for the age group 50-64. The text reads as if the result for mortality in this age group is also increasing, however the confidence interval around the estimate for mortality is wide and includes zero.

The potential influence of screening on the trend seen in incidence for women aged 50-65 is mentioned in the first paragraph of the Discussion along with other potential influences such as a decrease in the use of HRT. However the issue of screening practices in this community is pivotal. It is essential that information about prevalence of use of screening and whether there is an invitation to screening in any age group (particularly women aged 50-64) is included in the manuscript so that the observation about the upward trend in incidence in women aged 50-65 can be interpreted.

The English expression in the first sentence of the Discussion is poor and again the implication is that there is evidence of increasing mortality in women aged 50-64 years which is not consistent with the data in Table 2.

The figure legend refers to prostate cancer when it should refer to breast cancer.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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