Reviewer's report

Title: High incidence of prostate cancer metastasis in Afro-Brazilian men with low educational levels.

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Reviewer: Neil Martin

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Overview: Souza and colleagues present data on 1,349 men with newly diagnosed prostate cancer at a single institution in Brazil between 1997 and 2005. They make correlations between self reported skin color (black vs. other) and educational attainment and disease extent at diagnosis and clinical outcomes. The researchers show among a population with a median age of 71.3 years, men who reported being black were 3 times more likely to present with metastatic disease and men who had <8 years of education were 4.8 times more likely to present with metastatic disease compared to men with >11 years of education. On multivariate analysis, only metastatic disease at diagnosis was associated with poor outcome.

The stated intention of the authors was to identify prognostic factors in prostate cancer. What they have reported is the correlation of socioeconomic factors with disease features at diagnosis. To determine whether socioeconomic factors correlate with poor prognosis, other known prognostic factors have to be controlled for. That is, one would want to compare men matched at diagnosis on known prognostic factors (PSA, Gleason score and T-stage) to see if ethnicity and education level relate to eventual outcome. As the authors point out, socioeconomic factors may relate more to access to care than to true prognosis. As such, the thrust of this paper should be shifted. Either the authors should control for other prognostic factors or should better outline factors which may relate to presenting with advanced/metastatic disease such as number of prior visits to a physician, PSA screening etc. As presented, the authors have misinterpreted their findings. That is not to say that the findings are unimportant - access to care clearly matters - but they need to clarify their story.

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