Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 31 July 2012

Reviewer: Annalisa Rosso

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The implications of the study are not clearly stated. Only a generic reference to the implications of the study findings is made, by saying that they “should guide improvements in the public health systems that attempt to change these patterns” (line 185); this should be elaborated a bit more: which are the improvements suggested? I.e. it should be clarified whether the results of this study have an impact on prevention measures (i.e. increasing access to early diagnosis for Afro-Brazilian population) or on treatment. In the Background section the authors suggest that the study of prognostic factors is necessary to aid the choice of the best possible treatment (lines 81-82), while the results seem to indicate the need to increase access to early diagnosis among the Afro-Brazilian population.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. In both the Abstract and the Background section, it is stated that the study aimed at investigating the “socio-economic”/ “socio-demographic” factors influencing the prognosis of prostatic cancer, while actually the only factor studied was the educational level. I would suggest changing this definition, especially in the abstract, and referring specifically to “educational level”.

2. In the Methods section, there is some confusion regarding the terms used to describe the outcome variables studied:
   • In line 108 reference is made to “aggressive disease” as “regional and distant tumors”: does this mean “tumors with regional or distant metastasis”? Try to better define this.
   • In line 109 the authors describe the endpoint as “progressive disease at the end of the first stage of treatment”: is this the same as what was previously mentioned as “aggressive disease”? Use the same words consistently.
   • In the Methods section (line 90), in the Results section (line 138) and in both tables reference is made to “poor outcome”, but there is no clear definition of this term throughout the article: is this the same as the “endpoint” described in the Methods section, thus meaning mortality and/or a progressive/aggressive disease after the first stage of treatment? This should be clarified.
3. Some minor changes are required in reporting and data deposition:
   • Standard deviations should be included in Table 1.
   • Table 2 is not easy to read, adjust formatting (CI values should be on the same line, table headings should be on one line only).
   • In line 128 of the Results section it is stated that the study suggests that educational status and self-reported skin color are “risk factors”: does it mean risk factors for distant metastases at the time for diagnosis? Try to better explain this.

4. In lines 178/179 reference is made to “potential confounding effects of complex relationship among some variables”: it should be stated which are these variables and on the confounding effects.

5. A Conclusions section is missing, although some conclusions are listed in the Discussion section.

6. Both the terms “metastases” and “metastasis” are used throughout the text: make use of the same spelling consistently.

7. Some minor revisions are required in referencing:
   • Referencing lacks the “issue” number, only volume and pages of referenced articles are reported. Reference number 7 also lacks the journal’s volume and pages.
   • Line 84: the 5-years survival rate of 58% for patients with prostate carcinoma needs referencing.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Given that the main variables studied are race and educational status, it may be useful to present data related to these 2 variables (frequencies and percentages) also in the text, and not just in table n.1.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.
Annalisa Rosso