Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of life of Lithuanian women with early stage breast cancer

Version: 2 Date: 9 November 2006

Reviewer: Evaon Wong-Kim

Reviewer's report:

General
The abstract should be rewritten so that it can be more succinct.

Background
On page 3, second sentence under second paragraph 2, it is unclear what Analysis of 27 scientific researches allowed concluding . . . Does this mean a meta-analysis was conducted or just a literature review?
The authors jumped into BCT without defining what BCT includes in the Background section.
On second paragraph, line 5 stated: “The study of 5 year . . .” what is the study? There is no reference after “the study.”
Under paragraph 5 it is unclear what Functional Assessment of Cancer Anemia Subscale . . . it is unclear what this sentence means.

Materials and Methods
Due to the different types of subscales, even with the table to explain these measuring tools the first few paragraphs are still very confusing. The authors may want to consider rewriting this section and focus more on the instrument that was actually used to assess quality of life and what are the items included in this subscale.

The Results and Discussion
This section needs major revision. There are several problems in this section. First of all it is unclear what the authors mean by “significance.” Does it mean statistical significant differences between the two groups?
If so, then they need to support these differences or lack of differences by providing p values and explaining what kind of statistical test they performed, such as t tests or Chi Squares. Also, is there enough statistical power to detect the differences if each group is further divided into with and without chemo, which will be a total of 4 groups? The figures provided are not very helpful mainly because crucial information such as values of the t-scores and p values were not included. The authors may want to construct a table with the outcome variables provided with t scores and p values to indicate any statistical significant differences between or among the groups. Besides reporting the outcomes of the study there is really no discussion included in this manuscript, what are some of the reasons the authors think may have contributed to the results of the study? Are women in Lithuanian women confronting different medical or social situations compared to other women to contribute to the results of this study? Because many of the published quality of life studies were conducted in the United States using white women it will be interesting to see how Lithuanian women are confronting the same issues relating to sexuality and coping mechanism that may be different than women in the US.

In responding to the questions posed by the editor:

1. Although the question posed by the authors is not new in the US, it may be new to see the question about Lithuanian women and how their quality of life changed after surgery. However, the term quality of life is not well defined. Especially for those readers who have not seen the instrument used to measure QOL in this paper, it will be very unclear how QOL is defined.
2. See comment above on Methods and Materials section.
3. The data is lacking specific information for the reviewer to understand what information was collected to conduct the statistical analyses.
4. No, the Methods and Results sections need major revisions.
5. See comment above on Discussion.
6. Yes, somewhat.
7. The writing needs work and it is understandable because this is a manuscript submitted by authors who are from Lithuania. However, certain information still need to be presented to make this a publishable research manuscript.
There is no statistical information in this manuscript provided therefore a statistical review may help the authors to structure their resubmission.

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

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes