Reviewer's report

Title: Impacts of the Finnish service screening programme on breast cancer rates

Version: 1 Date: 29 May 2007

Reviewer: Stephen W Duffy

Reviewer's report:

General

This is an interesting paper on breast cancer incidence and mortality in association with a mammographic screening programme with an unusually narrow age, 50-59. The results show a modest benefit in advanced stage disease and mortality terms and suggest that expanding the programme to ages 50-69 might bring improved results. 

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

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. My only major comment relates to the 40-49 age group, in which mortality increased in the period studied. First, I feel this is worthy of some attention in the discussion section. Secondly, the result seems at odds with the statement in the first paragraph of the Discussion section that there is “a consistent decrease… … all the studied age group 40-69”. Can this be clarified?

2. In the introduction it is worth mentioning the Swedish Organised Service Screening Evaluation Group’s analytic strategies for mortality analysis (Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention, 2006).

3. First sentence of results section: can the authors be more specific about expected values in the absence of screening? Do they involve extrapolation of pre-screening period effects?

4. Can the authors remind us what is meant by “refined mortality”?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests