Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical characteristics of rheumatoid arthritis patients undergoing cervical spine surgery: An analysis of National Database of Rheumatic Diseases in Japan

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Reviewer: Axel Wanivenhaus

Reviewer's report:

1. The present work confirms the importance of screening the cervical spine in patients with RA. Early inflammatory changes in the cervical spine can be the basis for further progressive instabilities even following sufficient drug therapy.

2. The correlation with signs of inflammation, number of additional joint operations and behavioral scores is an important message but not new. Winfield reported this in 1983. The comparison with the control group out of register data seems to be unique and this can be pointed out.

3. What I am missing is a complete inclusion and discussion of the literature for this field. Hundreds of papers concerning cervical spine in RA are existing and only 8 papers are cited.

4. Also the importance of treatment consequences have to be mentioned and literature discussed. There is a wide consens that operative intervention before the onset of advanced myelopathy results in improved outcomes compared to the surgical stabilization of patients whose conditions are more advanced.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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