Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 29 March 2014

**Reviewer:** Toru Maruyama

**Reviewer's report:**

I enjoyed reading a manuscript regarding the characteristics of the RA patients who underwent cervical spine surgery.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

1. My concern is the number of the surgery. Forty centers participated in this database. So the average Japanese center was conducting only 0.5 cervical spine surgery, 3 TKAs, and 1 THA per year. I am not sure this database reflects the actual RA treatment situation in Japan.

2. RA patients who underwent cervical spine surgery had longer disease duration and higher disease activity, whereas biologics and even MTX were not used for most of them.

What do the authors think the reason for this?

AS far as biologics were not used or tried for these patients, I do not think that the authors can describe that biologics could not decrease the number (rate) of the cervical spine surgery, or the patients received intensive treatment for RA. Regarding the joint replacement surgery, was their decreasing trend statistically significant?

I think it will take some time after this study period before the effect of biologics for cervical spine can be demonstrated.

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

**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.