Reviewer's report

Title: Use of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and risk of re-operation due to post-surgical bleeding in breast cancer patients: a Danish population-based cohort study

Version: 2 Date: 25 September 2009

Reviewer: T Schalekamp

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes
3. Are the data sound? Yes, but some improvement (see review)
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

Reviewer's report

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Gärtner et al. present an interesting study on the effect of SSRIs of bleeding risk after surgery in breast cancer patients. Since there are many controversies about the bleeding risk of SSRIs in different settings, the findings of this paper are interesting and of clinical relevance. The paper is well written, but needs some clarification on several points.

Major compulsive revisions:

1. I did not quite understand the statement in the Introduction about intraoperative and postoperative bleeding. I understand that intraoperative bleeding is very rare (could the authors add a reference for this statement?). But what do the authors mean with ‘Significant postoperative bleeding’? Does it occur frequently in patients after surgery or do the authors mean that postoperative bleeding is also a rare event, but if occurring, frequently resulting in re-operation? Please, clarify. Although the results of this study indicate a low risk of re-operation, it would be interesting to know what is already known about this subject.
2 Considering the above mentioned point, I would suggest to add a power calculation. What was the power to find a meaningful difference in reoperation due to SSRI use in this cohort?

3 In the Discussion the authors rightly state that misclassification of current use or former use could have been a problem. Did they consider any sensitivity analysis, varying the definition of current use of SSRIs? They defined current anti-depressant use as a receipt of a prescription of an SSRI within 90 days before hospital admission, but they could also reanalyze their results if only prescription within 60 or 30 days before admission are considered. I would suggest to add such a sensitivity analysis and, if this is not possible, to mention the absence of a sensitivity analysis in the Discussion section as a limitation.

Minor essential revisions
1 Is there any reference for choosing a time-window of 14 days after surgery for re-operation?
2 What is exactly meant by ‘SSRI use is ever more prevalent' in the Introduction? Could the authors indicate to what extent SSRI use has been increased during the last decade?
3 In the paragraph about potential confounders: what are oral anticoagulants next to platelet inhibitors and vitamin K antagonists?

- Accept without revision
- Accept after discretionary revisions (which the authors can choose to ignore)
xx Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to make)
- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
- Reject because scientifically unsound
- Reject because too small an advance to publish (note that BMC Surgery will publish all sound studies including sound negative studies)

Level of interest
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BMC Surgery has a policy of publishing all scientifically sound research whatever its level of interest. However if you choose one of the first three categories below, we may ask the authors if they would like the manuscript considered instead for the more selective journal BMC Medicine.

- An exceptional article (of the kind that might have warranted publication in such journals as Nature, Cell, Science, New England Journal of Medicine, British Medical Journal)
- An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field (of the kind that might be
found in the leading specialist journal in its field, such as Immunity, Development, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Gastroenterology)

xx An article of importance in its field
- An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
- An article of limited interest
- An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English
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Acceptable.