Reviewer’s report

Title: Cervical lymph node metastasis classified as regional nodal staging in thoracic esophageal squamous cell carcinoma after radical esophagectomy and three-field lymph node dissection

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Reviewer: Hasan Batirel

Reviewer’s report:

The paper focuses on the outcomes of cervical lymph node metastasis in squamous cell carcinoma of the esophagus. Although it is a retrospective study, it analyzes a large no of patients. Paper is well written. Their results are supportive of current staging system. However it has a short discussion for such a paper. My comments are below:

1. Abstract: 101, 104, 102 and 103 are not explained in the methods section thus they are not understandable.

2. Results: The frequency of CLM in thoracic SCC is well known. In figures 2 and 3 did the patients have any other lymph node metastasis other than cervical lymph nodes. If so this should be clarified. It would be important to see if the survival rates in patients with isolated metastasis to CLs and with more than one metastasis to CLs and CL metastasis plus metastasis to other thoracic/abdominal locations. If the authors wish to give a message for new staging, current staging only relies on the number of lymph nodes and not the location (or multiple locations). In table 2, does no of lymph node metastasis means only cervical LN metastasis?

3. The authors also report favorable results with postoperative radiation. They should also report the complications related with postoperative radiation as this is not a widely accepted strategy due to the risks of radiation induced complications.

4. Recurrence data should also be included. This is especially important to justify application of postoperative radiation.

5. We do not need the total no of dissected lymph nodes in table 1. Line 2 in Table 1 should be deleted.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests