Author's response to reviews

Title: Autonomic dysfunction in patients with advanced cancer; prevalence, clinical correlates and challenges in assessment.

Authors:

Carol A Stone (carolstone130@yahoo.co.uk)
Rose Anne Kenny (rkenny@tcd.ie)
Brid Nolan (bridnolan@eircom.net)
Peter G Lawlor (plawlor@bruyere.org)

Version: 2 Date: 19 January 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
Deer Dr Henderson,

Re MS 8645722976163466: Autonomic dysfunction in patients with advanced cancer; prevalence, clinical correlates and challenges in assessment.

Thank you for reviewing the above-named paper. I am grateful to you, and to the reviewers, for the thoughtful assessment and comments. Please find a revised version of the manuscript attached. The reviewers’ comments are addressed below.

1. I have included information regarding the association between autonomic dysfunction (AD) and survival in the conclusion section.

2. We conducted analyses to examine the relationship between performance status (measured by Palliative performance Scale) and having definite/severe AD. In univariate analysis a relationship between lower PPS score and definite/severe AD was demonstrated, but this did not persist in the logistic regression model. I have reported this in the results section.

3. We have not presented any data regarding the relationship between either autonomic dysfunction / orthostatic hypotension and falls risk as this will be included in a subsequent paper pertaining to the main findings of the prospective study of the risk factors for falls in patients with advanced cancer.

4. In the background section we have given an admittedly concise explanation regarding the underlying principles of cardiovascular autonomic function testing. I have added an additional sentence (p3-4) to explain the relative prominence of tests of cardiovascular autonomic function over tests of other systems and a reference to a comprehensive paper on testing autonomic function (reference #5).

5. The Ewing’s criteria capture cardiovascular autonomic function, as stated by Reviewer 2. In the background section we have discussed the involvement of autonomic dysfunction on other systems. We have added an additional sentence in the discussion section (p15) to point out that testing of autonomic function involving other systems is appropriate, as directed by symptoms.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Carol Stone