Reviewer's report

Title: Classifying the Precancers: A Meta Data Approach

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Version: 2 Date: 19 May 2003

Reviewer: Alan A.L Rector

Level of interest: A paper of considerable general medical or scientific interest

Advice on publication: Reject

This paper reports an interesting approach to an important problem - classifying precancers. The basic approach to the methodology in breaking down the problem into a series of axes and representing it as metadata is potentially sound. Many of the issues discussed are valid.

Unfortunately, there is, by now, a very large literature on methodologies of classification including extensive work at the authors' own institutions, particularly the National Cancer Institute. Sadly the authors seem to be aware of none of it. It is neither cited, referenced, nor does the text show familiarity with it. Nor does it show familiarity or discuss the standard techniques for expressing metadata in XML: RDF(S), Topic Maps, and DAML+OIL/OWL.

In fact, the methodology which the authors employ has been widely discussed in both biomedical and other domains. The domain specific content on pre-cancers is valuable, much to be admired and should be published. However, the paper as it stands can no more be published than a paper on a new therapy or laboratory technique which fails to mention or compare its results with the alternatives or to use standard statistical or laboratory techniques.

Competing interests:

None declared.