Reviewer's report

Title: Recent population-based trends and variation in the management of oesophagogastric cancer patients

Version: 1 Date: 25 October 2009

Reviewer: Mona Jeffreys

Reviewer's report:


This is an interesting article, which addresses an important question. The analyses are appropriate, and the manuscript is clearly written. The data sources is clearly described, and limitations of this are dealt with well. I have only some minor comments which could be addressed prior to publication.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Page 3, 3rd last line: replace “may not explain” with “do not seem to fully explain”

Minor Essential Revisions
1. As a general rule, wherever an OR is quoted, it should be accompanied by a CI (e.g. in abstract).
2. Analyses should be described as “multivariable” not “multivariate”.
3. Table 1: I did not understand the definition of p* “adjusting for deprivation group only”, since deprivation group is the main explanatory variable? This P value should be the result of the chi-squared test surely? Also P** does not appear in the table (but does in the footnote) – perhaps the footnote of this table is incorrect?
4. Additional table 1: Why give P values from logistic regression for comparison of proportions?

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. In describing the changes in treatment patterns over time, the authors do not consider the possibility that data quality may have changed.
2. Table 1: the patterns of inequalities in treatment appear to differ by outcome. For chemotherapy, there appears to be a linear decrease in likelihood of receiving this treatment across deprivation groups, whereas for curative surgery, the effect is driven by the most deprived (and possible the second most deprived) group. The authors appear to have used deprivation as a continuous variable without considering from the more detailed analysis whether this is appropriate. They also do not comment on this in the text. This however, is an important issue, with public health consequences.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.