Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 26 October 2009

Reviewer: Elizabeth Davies

Reviewer's report:

Comments to editor

This seems a well-conducted study using cancer registration data to explore treatment trends and patterns for oesophagogastric cancer treatment for different social groups within one English region during 1995-2006. Cancer registry data has its limitations, which the authors recognise, but the analysis is well-conducted and its interpretation is strengthened by the clinical experience of co-authors. It provides a useful addition to the literature and makes some suggestions for future research. The study confirms earlier suggestions that curative surgery has increased and chemotherapy decreased and shows that these two treatments were used less often in deprived patients and surprisingly that chemotherapy less commonly in women. The main weakness of the study is no data on co-morbidity and low completeness for data on stage (44%). Surprisingly advanced stage disease was not associated with deprivation or sex, but this should be explored on more complete and larger datasets.

Minor essential revisions

The abstract needs to mention
1) kind of analysis performed i.e. logistic regression analysis
2) subgroups considered and factors adjusted for
3) low completeness for stage and no data on co-morbidity at least

It might exclude mention of “ordinal group” for deprivation or make this sentence a bit clearer

Methods

A sentence on specific geographical areas included in Eastern Region to orientate international readers (and some UK ones) to exactly where these patients come from

A fuller explanation of the IMD. The current sentence is a little complex and may not be understandable to clinical or non-English audiences

The paragraph on information available on surgical treatment needs some attention. One sentence appears to extend over six lines.
Minor discretionary revisions

Results

Add mean ages of men and women to first paragraph results

Reordering the keys in figures 1 and 2 to follow the order in the graph or the last point would make them slightly easier to read and interpret.

Table 1 needs to include $p^{**}$ within it. Currently it is in the key only. It might be useful to show unadjusted and adjusted odds ratios so that the two can be compared.

The columns in the additional files could be placed in the same order.

The first sentence of the conclusion could be stated more directly. This paragraph could ideally restate the time period, areas studied and the kind of data used.

Elizabeth Davies
Victoria Coupland

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

We declare that we have no competing interests.