Reviewer's report

Title: Medium-term outcome of recipients of marginal donor hearts selected with new stress-echocardiographic techniques over standard criteria

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Reviewer: Albert A Varga

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The Authors of the present manuscript assessed the medium-term outcome of recipients of “marginal” donor hearts selected with new echocardiographic methods over standard criteria. According to the established criteria by the Authors 43 hearts were selected for transplantation and after an average time of 30 months follow up 93% of the transplanted patients were still alive. The Authors concluded, that “strict use of new stress-echocardiographic techniques over standard criteria of marginal donor management, together with comprehensive monitoring of the donor, has the potential to substantially increase the number of donor hearts without adverse effects on recipient medium-term outcome.”

The topic is important, the paper is well written.

I have only minor questions and comments, which are the following:

1. In the Introduction section the Authors stated that: “In Europe every year a pool of #4500 unused hearts (500 in Italy) with permission granted for heart donation is estimated, from which additional transplants could be generated, with more confidence in their post-transplantation performance (Council of Europe, Donation and Transplantation, 2011). Please, provide a reference. (Presumably: Dominguez-Gil et al, Transplant International 2011; 24:676–686?)

2. The description of the Statistical Analysis part on page 5 should be revisited and rewritten, since some of the methods mentioned were not used in the manuscript.

3. Due to the small sample size, the separate demonstration of the survival of the different donor groups in the Kaplan-Meier curve seems to be inappropriate.

4. On page 6, line 5, “Two of the 42 eligible transplanted hearts showed significant…” Presumably 43.

5. In the limitation section the statement that: “It has been demonstrated that the presence of donor-transmitted coronary atherosclerosis does not accelerate the progression of intimal hyperplasia or affect the 3-year prognosis of transplant recipients.” should be bolstered by references.

6. The list of the references should be revisited and the older references should be cut.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

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