Reviewer's report

Title: Circulating Tumor Cells: A Tool That Has Come of Age

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Reviewer: Moritz Koch

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The paper entitled “Circulating Tumor Cells: A Tool Whose Time Has Come of Age” by Ramona F. Swaby and Massimo Cristofanilli is an interesting and well written mini-review about the detection and clinical use as prognostic markers of circulating tumour cells (ctc) in breast cancer patients. The paper is up to date and includes recent clinical data and a good overview about ongoing large clinical studies related to ctc's in breast cancer patients. Data presentation is sound and straightforward.

The topic is of general interest for the audience of BMC-medicine.

There are only minor essential revisions, which need to be addressed before publication:

- This review is solely focused on the role of ctc in breast cancer patients. As the authors do not refer to the role of these markers in other groups of patients (e.g. colorectal cancer, prostate cancer) this has to be made clear in a changed title, as well as in the abstract and introduction.

- In the background section it is misleading that 40,000 women in the US are “affected” by breast cancer each year: the incidence is much higher with 200,000 women in the US per year - and 40,000 breast cancer related deaths per year.

- It should be explained in the background section why cts's are defined as “nucleated cells lacking CD45 and expressing cytokeratin” in 2 or 3 sentences for readers not familiar with this topic.

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.