Reviewer's report

Title: UK Waiting Time Targets In Lung Cancer Treatment: Are They Achievable? Results Of A Prospective Tracking Study

Version: Date: 1 2 October 2006

Reviewer: Ron Fergusson

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper from a single UK centre reports on the fact that around 50% of lung cancer patients fail to meet the government waiting time target of 62 days from GP referral to treatment.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The first five figures (apart from figure 3) contribute little and look as if they have been cut and pasted from a poster. The data could be easily presented in a table.

2. The target is from the date of GP referral not the date of receipt of referral which may add more delay. This requires some comment.

3. No data is presented as to why delays were encountered. There is some comment in para 3 of the discussion that this is due to 'complex patient pathways' but no data is presented. Did patients receive PET scans? What proportion of patients had to be re-discussed at MDT? Were the waiting times for the three treatments different because patients were receiving more investigations? Was co-morbidity important?

4. Was there any difference between the waiting time of patients referred from GPs compared to the Casualty/internal referrals? Usually GP referrals are fitter and have better stage disease with less co-morbidity.

5. What is the relevance of the Chritie Hospital? (para 4 of discussion)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Figures 6 and 7 only refer to 133 patients (GP referrals). This should be made clear.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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