Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical significance in the number of involved lymph nodes in patients that underwent surgery for pathological stage III-N2 non-small cell lung cancer

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Reviewer: Takayuki Fukui

Reviewer's report:

The authors have evaluated the prognostic significance of the number of positive lymph nodes after lung resection for N2-stageIIIA non-small lung cancer. Despite the retrospective type of analysis useful information are contained in this paper. However, the reported details raise some arguments and questions.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors need to describe the resection criteria used for all the 690 patients. Did they include patients with clinical IIIA disease? If so, how many patients with clinical N2 disease were included?

2. Several articles concerning about the number of positive nodes in NSCLC have published and reported the usefulness as a prognostic factor even among N2 patients. The authors should refer these articles and clearly described the advantage of this study in the text.

3. In the surgical practice, sometimes one lymph node may be divided into a few pieces or it is found to be difficult to separate each node exactly from the "en bloc" dissected tissue. How the author has conquered this matter? Or it was thought to be negligible?

4. How many patients with skip metastasis had more than a single N2 lymph node metastasis? Is there an overlap or a relationship between the group with skip metastasis and the group with a single N2 lymph node metastasis?

5. The real drawback to the use of numbers of lymph nodes in a staging system is lack of ability to accurately use this factor clinically (pre-resection). The authors need to discuss this more extensively. How would they use current staging techniques to choose N2 patients that go directly to surgery?

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.