Reviewer's report

Title: Minimal Access Median Sternotomy for Aortic Valve Replacement in elderly patients

Version: 1 Date: 28 January 2013

Reviewer: Orlando Petrucci

Reviewer's report:

This article from Alassar and colleagues describe their experience with limited skin incision and a full sternotomy. The authors describe this technique as minimally invasive technique despite the complete sternum bone section. The manuscript is a description of the author’s experience with no comparative groups.

My observations concerning this paper will be categorized according to the reviewer’s policy of the Journal of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors did not compare their “minimally invasive technique” with any other group; therefore, they have limited capacity of any conclusions in their manuscript. The authors described a mortality of 0% with a very low risk group of patients (STS 5.71%). In this subset of patients, any surgery has to be safe. Please comment.

2. At Discussion section the authors describe that upper partial hemisternotomy is performed as routine in their institution. However, in this group of older patients they decline the hemisternotomy incision due to need of a faster surgery on those patients. Do the authors believe this small skin incision is faster than an upper partial hemisternotomy? Please add comments about this at Discussion section

3. Do the authors believe this small skin incision is responsible for the “safety” of the procedure? How can a small incision be more beneficial than a 5-6 cm longer incision to the patient? Please add comments at Discussion section.

Minor Essential Revision

1. Table 1 shows several variables that should display ± and SD. Please review.

2. Table 3 needs to add to the table’s bottom all means of acronyms.

Discretionary Revisions

none

Level of interest: Reject as not of sufficient priority to merit publishing in this
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