Reviewer’s report

Title: Use and Abuse of Fecal Occult Blood Tests: A Community Hospital Experience

Version: 0 Date: 14 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Holger Schäffler

Reviewer's report:

The fecal occult blood test is an important screening method in order to detect colorectal cancer. However, its misuse plays an important role in daily clinical practice. Soin et al have shown in their manuscript in a retrospective analysis of 729 patients, that no FOBT was used in order to screen for CRC. They also showed that it was mainly used to test for anemia. Use of inappropriate medication prior to testing was frequent.

Although this retrospective study is interesting, several questions arise:

1) Which test was used - gFOBT or iFOBT? Which manufacturer? Which specific test? Since the manuscript is based on this screening method, this should be described more precisely.

2) The most common indication for FOBT was anemia. Can the authors give more information about the anemia - were they microcytotic? Was iron-deficiency found? Did they check for vitamin B12 / folate efficiency?

3) 259 patients had a positive FOBT, but only 73 underwent diagnostic colonoscopy - The authors do not comment on this gap. Why did only 73 patients receive a colonoscopy? Why did the rest of the patients not receive colonoscopy?

4) The figure legends are not giving enough informations and should be extended.

5) The authors state, that no FOBT was performed for CRC screening. In Table 5 and also in the text they distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate FOBT testing. This should be discussed more carefully.

6) Table 4 shows the study population. How many patients between 50 and 75 had bleeding and were on antiplatelet therapy / oral anticoagulants?
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal