Reviewer’s report

Title: Under-treatment of elderly patients with ovarian cancer: A population-based study

Version: 1 Date: 18 June 2015

Reviewer: Elona Juozaityte

Reviewer’s report:

General
Dear Authors:

The population based study might be useful to evaluate daily clinical practices and to analyse the causes of under-treatment of ovarian cancer patients. Acknowledging the under-treatment might be important in improving of disease management.

The clinical outcomes of younger (less than 70 years) and elderly (up to 70 years) ovarian cancer patients diagnosed between 1997 till 2011 in the Herault Department of southern France and treated by surgery, chemotherapy and both methods were analysed. The purpose of the article was to establish the under-treatment of elderly women, but the data showed the pure situation in ovarian cancer management despite the age. Standard management of ovarian cancer was not applied in 169 women under the age of 70 years and in 153 patients older than 70 years. Furthermore, the tumor characteristics (histology, grade) are not fully analysed in both groups of patients. The relationship between comorbidities and under-treatment of the disease always exists in clinical practice. The major limitation of this manuscript is lack of information with regards to comorbidities and functional status of the patients. That’s why an article might be of limited interest.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The data were obtained from tumor registry and all cases of ovarian cancer were validated through systematic verification across original medical records. The incomplete clinical information with regards the study population is the major limitation of this study. For example: no information about comorbidities, not full patient’s survival data (survival analysis focuses on 389 death and 206 censored
from 1151 cases), big amount of unknown histology and tumor grade. Are the possibility to upgrade the information from medical records? It would be very helpful in order to know clear situation.

2. Abstract- in general is acceptable.

3. Background- acceptable. In my opinion- additional file (table 1 „Consensus treatment guideline of ovarian cancer“) is very primitive and also needs grammatical correction -,“treatment, guidline.” I would recommend to remove this additional file (table 1) and make the disease management more clear in the text.

4. Methods. Explanatory variables- this section is too long. In my opinion, it is not necessary to explain in details TNM classification, pathological classification, staging of ovarian cancer, because the readers of „BMC Cancer“ are educated in this field.

5. Results. It is not clear whether the analyses were sufficiently powered. Presented Kaplan Meier curves showing the survival results of study population do not include p – values from long –rank tests (fig. 1). Median survival of 595 women was 34.4 months. Survival of the patients by stage of the disease would be very helpful to understand the quality of ovarian cancer care. This study highlight the incomplete diagnostic and complex management for ovarian cancer patients. For example – among operated patients – no histology for 1 and unknown grade of tumor for 469 patients (71.1%), unknown stage of the disease-32 patients, etc. ( table 2). No standard treatment availability for 30.2% of young and for 47.9% of elderly patients.(table 5).

6. Discussion. The findings of the study highlight the pure situation in compex diagnosis and management of ovarian cancer patients. Please make it more clear in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Several grammatical errors that need to be corrected throughout the manuscript.

2. Table 1 „Age - 70 years“, please correct „> 70 years“.

3. The article needs more language correction than these few points.

Dicretionary Revisions

Level of interest

An article of limited interest

Quality of written English

Needs some language correction 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.

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