Reviewer’s report

Title: Different prognostic implication of ypTNM stage and pTNM stage for gastric cancer: A Propensity Score-matched Analysis

Version: 0 Date: 09 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Could an appropriately REVISED version of this work represent a technically sound contribution?

Maybe - with major revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: The manuscript describes the analysis of whether, in gastric cancer, the new neoadjuvant staging system (ypTNM) yields similar patient survival outcomes as the conventional pTNM staging system. One of their findings is that patients with specific ypTNM stages were more likely to die than patients corresponding to the same pTNM stage. This is not surprising since these patients were down-staged, and direct comparison to a non-NACT treated patient is what is being done. Regardless, the study appears to be the first direct comparison of
both staging systems using a fairly large cohort that is well balanced. For the most part, it is well
done, and the results are clearly presented. The manuscript itself, however, needs improvement.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

1. Page 2, Line 6: Pathological stage is considered as the best prognosis indicator. This sentence should include that this relates specifically to gastric cancer.

2. Page 2, Line 12: However, no study has investigated if ypTNM stage has the same prognostic implication as pTNM stage for gastric cancer.

3. Page 2, Line 47: certain ypTNM stage. Certain is not clear, please define this exactly. Which stage? This is repeated many times in the manuscript. Please change this throughout.

4. Page 2, Line 53: Multivariate Cox regression yielded a similar hazard ratio (HR) of 1.35 (95%CI=1.09-1.67, P=0.006). This statement could be more specific. What is the comparison that yielded a similar HR?

5. Page 2, Line 54: Subgroup analysis indicated this survival difference varied by TNM stage. Again, this could be rewritten to be more clearly.

6. Page 3, Line 6: certain ypTNM stage. Certain is not clear, please define this exactly.

7. Page 4, Line 3: Gastric cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide.

8. Page 4, Line 23: It has been adopted as the base of guideline by the NCCN since its first edition published in 1976 and has been widely implemented to clinical practice ever since while being revised and updated for several times. This is an awkwardly written sentence.


10. Page 5, Line 23: Patient clinicopathological information was restored in this database since their first-time treatment at the hospital. What does "restored" mean?

11. Page 6, Line 17: distinguished might be reworded as determined.

12. Page 6, Line 45: All patients had either ypTNM stage or pTNM stage as they would either receive preoperative NACT or not. This is not clearly written and is confusing.

13. Page 9, line 14: why were the 36 patients excluded?

14. Page 9, line 26: Most tumors were at middle differentiation grade. Is middle actually moderate differentiation?
15. Page 9, line 45: To better control for the confounding and make the two groups comparable in terms of …This sentence is awkwardly written.

16. Page 9, line 53: score-matched samples were comprised….

17. Page 10, line 23: We calculated Harrell's c-index when pathological staging used was ypTNM and when otherwise, to compare the prognostic prediction ability of ypTNM and pTNM. This sentence is awkwardly written.

18. Page 12, line 25: counterfactual is not clear to its meaning.

19. There should be a period after all references and not before unless this is the journal style.

20. Table 1: differentiation is usually poor, moderate and well not high, middle and low.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.

**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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Needs some language corrections before being published
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