Reviewer’s report

Title: Neoadjuvant docetaxel, cisplatin and ifosfamide (ITP) combination chemotherapy for treating penile squamous cell carcinoma patients with terminal lymph node metastasis

Version: 0 Date: 12 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Nick A. Watkin

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The authors have conducted a neo-adjuvant chemotherapy study in a population of advanced penile cancer.

The study design is very similar to other small studies in the literature. It is a challenge to recruit in such a population, and as such I accept that the limitations of the design (no RCT, retrospective) is almost inevitable. The strengths are the use of the same chemotherapy regime and analysis of response using internationally recognised methodology. Nonetheless, 19 evaluable patients over 7 years (3 per year) is on the lower range of published studies.

I have 3 main criticisms which I would appreciate responses:

1. The definition of fixed inguinal nodes is not sufficiently defined. Whilst I accept that it is also not well defined in the TMN clinical nodal stage, it should be clearer in this paper. Correlation with the CT appearances of the size and number of enlarged lymph nodes would be helpful. There may well be patients who would have been pathologically pN2 and who would have a better outcome than the group with extra capsular spread and therefore pN3.

2. There was significant variation in the number of neo-adjuvant cycles. There is no explanation as to why, apart from the one patient who progressed early.

3. I do not agree with the conclusion that ITP is effective in a neo-adjuvant setting. The authors have not presented any evidence to conclude that. It has simply been shown that responders to ITP do better than the non-responders, who ultimately had different treatment and that is has acceptable tolerability. The authors have not shown any benefit over surgery alone.

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.

No
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

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

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