Reviewer’s report

Title: Acute exacerbations of fibrosing interstitial lung disease associated with connective tissue diseases: a population-based study

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Reviewer: Yasuhiro Kondoh

Reviewer's report:

Comments to the Author

In this manuscript, the authors demonstrated acute exacerbations of fibrosing interstitial lung disease associated with connective tissue disease. This is a good viewpoint, however there are serious concerns as described below.

Major comments:

1. Patients selection of this study is very unclear. The authors should demonstrate patient flow chart. The number of patients who met inclusion and exclusion criteria should be mentioned as Figure. They showed the number of ILD inpatients each year, but the number of newly diagnosed ILD patients should be shown. In addition, when was the diagnosis of AE decided by the recent criteria of AE? Why were patients with inconsistent with UIP pattern on HRCT? I think all AE patients should be included.

2. How did the authors diagnose the patients? Was the multidisciplinary discussion (MDD) held for ILD diagnosis? The authors should demonstrate the data before AE including pulmonary function test and CT patterns. CT patterns at AE and pulmonary function test after AE are often quite different from those before AE. Also, how about the recently revised CT patterns of the current guidelines (UIP, probable UIP, indeterminate for UIP, and alternative diagnosis)?

3. How did the authors exclude patients fully explained heart failure or fluid overload? Although they showed higher BNP and mean PAP, when and how they diagnosed pulmonary hypertension is very unclear.

4. The authors should discuss the differences between triggered AE and idiopathic AE.

5. The authors demonstrated the prognostic factors of AE within 1-year after ILD diagnosis. The baseline data should be shown. If there are many missing data, it becomes misleading.

6. There is no consensus as to whether patients with UCTD can be included in CTD. References and definitions of UCTD did not provided. If the authors include these patients in this study, I recommend the term of interstitial pneumonia with autoimmune features (IPAF).
Minor comments:
1. The authors should describe the follow-up period.
2. The authors should describe the anti-fibrotic therapy for IPF.
3. The authors should divide mechanical ventilation into invasive and non-invasive ventilation.
4. The authors should add the unit of methylprednisolone.
5. The authors should describe the details of immunosuppressive agents.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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.

No

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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

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