Reviewer’s report

Title: Prognostic value of cardiopulmonary exercise testing in patients with systemic sclerosis

Version: 0 Date: 29 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Reda Girgis

Reviewer's report:

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This is a large study assessing the prognostic value of CPET in SSc. The finding of strong relationship between various CPET parameters, as well as 6 MWD, is important, as it demonstrates the utility of exercise testing in this population.

Specific Comments

1. With the multitude of clinical parameters examined, it is not clear from what point survival was calculated. Under statistical analysis section it is stated that "For group status the follow-up time was calculated based at the time of diagnosis; for the other variables the time of first examination defined the starting point." What does group status refer to? Was survival taken from the time of CPET or other time point? If CPET and the other assessments were performed at different times, how was the survival impact of each variable assessed?

2. It would be valuable to know if CPET was abnormal and predicted survival in patients without overt pulmonary involvement with ILD or PAH. The authors speculate that CPET may serve as early risk marker.

3. It is also not clearly stated if the models shown represent risk factors that are all independent of each other. e.g Does CPET add prognostic information to DLCO or KCO?

4. Line 3 in Results section seems like it should say that dcSSc had a "lower" proportion of women than lcSSc
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

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If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

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