**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Functional Outcomes after Resections for Low Rectal Tumors: Comparison of Transanal with Laparoscopic Total Mesorectal Excision

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 21 Mar 2019

**Reviewer:** Alexander Heriot

**Reviewer's report:**

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The authors present a cohort study of 46 patients undergoing either laparoscopic or transanal total mesorectal excision (taTME) and compare pathological and functional outcome of the patients before and 6 months after surgery. The definitive outcome was functional outcome, assessed by the LARS score and Jorge-Wexner score. The paper assesses a very topical question as the functional outcome following taTME has had limited exploration so far and the topic would interest and be relevant to the readership. The paper requires modification prior to consideration of publication.

**Title**

Appropriate

**Abstract**

Appropriate

**Introduction**

Appropriate

L64 P3 Grammar 'A novel, transanal approach to total mesorectal excision (TaTME) is believed to be a at least…' Please correct 'a'.
Methods

Were all patients with rectal cancer below 5 cm undergoing a restorative TME included in the study? Were there any exclusions. As abdomino-perineal resections (APER) were excluded it would be optimal to add APER as an exclusion to the methods section.

Had the surgeons undertaken any taTME on patients prior to the start of the study?

How many surgeons were involved and did the same surgeons undertake the laparoscopic and the taTME cases?

The height of the anastomosis can impact on functional outcome and the height of the pursestring from the anal verge in taTME cases is influenced by the technique utilized to insert as well as the tumour height. Were the pursestrings inserted by hand suturing transanally or under pneumorectum using the TEO platform? What stapler was used for the laparoscopic TME cases for the anastomosis and what was used for the taTME cases?

Who applied the questionnaires to the patients? Was this data all collected prospectively or was any collected retrospectively?

Stats

Appropriate

Results

Tables 2 and 3 could be combined into one larger table.

Discussion

Appropriate

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.

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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