Reviewer’s report

Title: Fractionated palliative thoracic radiotherapy in non-small cell lung cancer - futile or worth-while?

Version: 1 Date: 08 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Joshua Jones

Reviewer's report:

I thank the authors for their responses to my comments - their responses significantly strengthen the paper and make it worthy of publication.

At this time, my only additional comment is one that could have been added with the initial paper:

The term "futile" elicits many responses and could be defined in the paper to help readers to understand how the authors are using this term. The authors correctly point out that patients who receive single fraction RT (of which there were very few in this study) potentially have faster symptomatic responses to radiotherapy. If median time to full response after single fraction palliative thoracic radiotherapy is 5 weeks, a number of patients would have some response to radiotherapy within 30 days (the authors' cutoff for futile care). So for some of these patients, a single fraction of palliative thoracic radiotherapy may actually confer symptomatic benefit while minimizing burdens. This could be highlighted better in the article. I would suggest two minor changes to help to highlight this point:

1. In the introduction, I would suggest defining the concept of futility and how the authors are using futility in this article.

2. In the discussion section (particularly the first paragraph and the last paragraph), it would be helpful to refer back to the definition of futility and clarify that single fraction radiotherapy may not be futile in this patient population and may represent a reasonable alternative to optimal supportive care for these patients.

There are also still a few typographical errors and grammatical errors that can be corrected.

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

Yes
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If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
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