Reviewer’s report

Title: Delay along the care-seeking journey of patients with ocular surface squamous neoplasia in Kenya

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Reviewer: Der-Chong Tsai

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To Authors:

In this study, the authors investigated referral pathway and treatment delay for patients with new OSSN presenting to 4 eye centers in Kenya. They found the number of health facilities visited before receiving surgery and female gender were significantly associated with treatment delay.

1. These four study centers were identified to perform the highest number of conjunctival excision biopsy between 2008 and 2011. Was this kind of surgery popular outside these four study centers in Kenya or just exclusively carried out in these centers? Is it possible that the patients with OSSN found in Facility 1 and were referred to Facility 2, rather than study centers, to have tumor excision? Besides, the treatment of OSSN include surgical, nonsurgical, or combined management, though there is no consensus about the optimal regimen. Therefore, the treatment delay should be defined as the time interval between awareness of having tumor lesion and surgical treatment in study center.

2. The data regarding the tumor awareness, cost of care and referral details were based on the structured questionnaire before surgery rather than medical records. The questionnaire, while practical, may not be the most accurate tool to evaluate care-seeking behavior. The analysis was subject to recall bias and this should be mentioned in the study limitation section.

3. Authors focused on the operation room facility in the care-seeking journey for indirect presenters. However, the experienced medical staff is also important and may have an impact on care-seeking behavior. How about the distribution of qualified ophthalmologists outside these four study centers?

4. How about the patients' history of ocular disease? The past experience of receiving eye care may be associated with care-seeking behavior regarding the OSSN management.

5. Though indirect presenters had longer treatment delay than the direct presenters, both had similar tumor size (6mm) and histological spectrum of OSSN. Was treatment delay associated with poor surgical outcome?

6. Since indirect presenters visiting two or more health facilities before having surgery had significantly longer delay than both indirect presenters who visited only one facility and direct
presenters, subgroup analysis among indirect presenters may provide more informative evidence on care-seeking behavior and clinical manifestation.

**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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I am able to assess the statistics

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