Reviewer's report

Title: Effects of a Parallel Arm Randomized Controlled Weight Loss Pilot Study on Biological and Psychosocial Parameters of Overweight and Obese Breast Cancer Survivors

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Reviewer: Rowan Chlebowski

Reviewer's report:

Arikawa and colleagues present findings from a very small randomized controlled weight loss pilot study on biological and psychosocial parameters of overweight and obese breast cancer survivors. The trial is well designed and conducted. The endpoints selected are appropriate and, as the authors suggest, are less commonly incorporated in randomized weight loss trial in cancer survivors. The findings from this small trial are embedded in an overly long discussion regarding the selected study endpoints with 84 citations.

There could be issues raised regarding the fair balance and conclusions regarding several of the presentations made in the introduction and the discussion section. However, as I did not feel that a pilot or feasibility trial entering 21 participants could support such an exhaustive review, I present an alternative. The authors cite a 2014 manuscript which reviewed the then 10 available randomized weight loss intervention trials in women with breast cancer. This issue was update in December 2016 adding 6 additional randomized trials (J Clin Oncology 34(35), December 2016: 4238-4248). This updated citation should be included. That manuscript is one of 11 in a special issue devoted to obesity and cancer in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. Two or 3 of citations will cover the issues raised by the authors and eliminate most of the citation list (the final citation list should optimally be 20 or less). This will free up a couple of references to support why the weight loss strategies were choosen and how the authors view the pros and cons of either approach with respect to potential for incorporation in larger clinical trials with respect to effort and expense.

If this is a pilot or feasibility study (rather than a one of a kind effort), the authors should outline what they anticipate the next step should be.

In summary, the authors should almost entirely eliminate their 84 citation review. They certainly could use those words to present a review of the area in another report but a pilot study of the sample size they present to really support no more than 20 citations.

Level of interest

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Dr. Chlebowski reported being a consultant for AstraZeina, Novartis, Amgen, and Genomic Health; receiving funding support from Amgen; and serving on the speaker’s bureau for Novartis and Genentech.

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