OPEN PEER REVIEW

Open Peer Review (OPR)

As a new feature for progressing towards transparency, we decided to open a new window for all of our editors as well as authors titled "**Open Peer Review**". We hope by this new facility, our reviewers will be more motivated and authors will be more satisfied with the review process. We believe that publishing our peer review reports could make a transparent and clear environment for all our efforts within a journal, but not all reviewers tend to publish their comments.

What is "Open Peer Review" process?

An "Open Peer Review" process is making the details of all review process (including reviewers, associate editors, and EICs comments) as "Public" as it is agreed by EIC, Authors, and reviewers.

Advantages of "Open Peer Review" process

- More transparency, constructiveness and tactful comments of the peer review process: leads to an increase in the quality of reviews
- More motivations for all involved roles in the review process
- Authors' satisfactions from the review process: Increases honesty between authors and reviewers
- Education of both authors and new students
- Prevents reviewers from following their individual agendas and leading to the detection of reviewers' conflicts of interests

You can find out more at:
https://sites.kowsarpub.com/kowsar/knowledgebase/category/tree.html#opr.html

International Journal of Cancer Management
Article DOI: 10.5812/ijcm.97922
Published in: International Journal of Cancer Management: 13(4); e97922

Peer Review Report for "Swallowing Outcomes Post Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy for Head and Neck Cancer Patients Using MD Anderson Dysphagia Inventory: An Institutional Experience"

Author(s): Priyanka Shirish Alurkar, Anshul Singh, Krishna Sharan, Anusha Reddy, Shirley Lewis, Umesh Velu, Priyanka Augustine

Review Timeline:

Submit Date:	7 Sep 2019
Revised Date:	3 Mar 2020
Accepted Date:	1 Apr 2020

Revision (0)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

Parastoo Hajian: Reviewer | **Revision** (0) 10 Oct 2019

Dear AE,

1- There is an abbreviation in the title.

2- DOI & PMID should be written for each reference.

3- This is the style for an abstract:

Background- Methods and Materials- Results- Conclusion-Keywords.

4- In the abstract section, the aim of the study should be inserted as the last line of the background.

5- We are not permitted to use any abbreviation without description for the first time both in the abstract and the body eg: Gy- VMAT- ....

6- It is better to omit the type of the essay in your Introduction.

7- Sample size formula or calculation was not seen.

8- The sampling method was deleted.

9- Ethical considerations (code or number) according to your institute was not mentioned.

10- In the discussion part, it is better to declare the main result(s) of the given article and then demonstrate the other studies.

11-The conclusion section should be included as the last paragraph of the discussion, not apart of that.
12- The first line of the conclusion must be defined as the aim of the study,and then the main result(s) could be explained in the second & third lines.
13- This treatise do not include of these parts:
Acknowledgment-Conflict of interest, Authors' contributions.
Thanks.

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision (0)** 19 Oct 2019

Dear EIC,
1- There is an abbreviation in the title.
2- DOI & PMID should be written for the each reference.
3- This is the style for an abstract:
Background- Methods and Materials- Results- Conclusion-Keywords.
4- In the abstract section, the aim of the study should be inserted as the last line of the background.
5- We are not permitted to use any abbreviation without description for the first time both in the abstract and the body eg: Gy- VMAT- ....
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10- In the discussion part, it is better to declare the main result(s) of the given article and then demonstrate the other studies.
11- The conclusion section should be included as the last paragraph of the discussion, not apart of that.
12- The first line of the conclusion must be defined as the aim of the study,and then the main result(s) could be explained in the second & third lines.
13- This treatise do not include of these parts:
Acknowledgment-Conflict of interest, Authors' contributions.
Thanks.

REFEREE: EIC | **Revision (0)** 21 Oct 2019

Dear Author,
please revise your manuscript according to the reviewers' comments and resubmit again. In addition please add the ORCID id of at least the first and corresponding authors in the authors section when submitting the revised manuscript. You can get an ORCID id from the ORCID website at https://orcid.org.
Thank you.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

27 October 2019

Respected Sir/Madam,

Thank you for reviewing the manuscript titled “Swallowing outcomes post Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy for head and neck cancer patients using MD Anderson Dysphagia Inventory: An institutional experience”. As required I have mentioned below point wise answers to the queries raised by you, kindly consider going through the same

1-There is an abbreviation in the title.
Ans: The same has been rectified Volumetric modulated arc therapy (VMAT)
2-DOI & PMID should be written for the each reference.
Ans: The DOI and PMID has been added for all the references.
3-This is the style for an abstract:
Background- Methods and Materials- Results- Conclusion-Keywords.
Ans: The style has been modified as suggested and the keyword have been added
4-In the abstract section, the aim of the study should be inserted as the last line of the background.
Ans: The same has been rectified
5-We are not permitted to use any abbreviation without description for the first time both in the abstract and the body eg: Gy- VMAT- ....
Ans: The descriptions have been added prior to use of the abbreviation.
6-It is better to omit the type of the essay in your Introduction.
Ans: The same has been omitted.
7-Sample size formula or calculation was not seen
As per the suggestion of the Institutional Medical Statistics Department consecutive patients undergoing treatment meeting the study criteria were selected owing to the short time period of the study (1 year) .Thus no sample size was calculated separately .This has been mentioned as a shortcoming of the study.
8-Sampling method was deleted.
Ans: Non Random sampling was used for the study the same has been added to the methods and materials section of the manuscript.
9-Ethical considerations (code or number) according to your institute was not mentioned.
Ans: The ethical committee approval code has been mentioned in the footnotes section of the manuscript prior to the references Reference number IEC 656/2016,Kasturba Hospital Manipal,KA,576104.
10-In the discussion part it is better to declare the main result(s) of the given article and then demonstrate the other studies.
Ans : The modification has been made as suggested
11-The conclusion section should be included as the last paragraph of the discussion, not apart of that.
Ans : The modification has been made as suggested
12-The first line of the conclusion must be defined the aim of the study,and then the main result(s) could be explained in the second & third lines.
Ans : The modification has been made as suggested
13-This treatise do not include of these parts:
Acknowledgment-Conflict of interest,Authors` contributions.
Ans : The additions have been made as suggested

Hope this satisfactorily answered the queries raised during the first review of the article.
regards

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (1) 24 Feb 2020

Dear AE,
Thanks to the authors for the submission of this valuable manuscript. There are some hints that can improve the quality of your submitted paper, as follows:
** General
- Try to correct many typographical and grammatical errors.
for example in "Target Volume Delineation", Line 7:
"were prescribed to a dose of 66-70 Gy,59.4Gy and 56 Gy respectively"
There are two missed commas prior to "and" and "respectively".
** Introduction
- Describe more about the data shortage regarding the radiation toxicity assessment of head and neck cancer. In other words, highlight the importance of your research in filling the gap in the literature.
- Put reference for this: "Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) has been adopted by many centers for the curative treatment of locally advanced head and neck cancers. The greatest benefit is achieving a steep dose gradient which translates into a better therapeutic ratio".
** Methods and Materials
* Treatment
- Put the reference: "The dose constraints for organs at risk (OARs)were set-pharyngeal constrictors (mean<45- 50Gy), larynx(mean<40Gy)and cervical oesophagus(mean<45-50Gy)."
** Results
* Dose-Volume characteristics
- " The overall mean doses to the constrictors, larynx and cervical oesophagus have been reported along with the individual subsites based doses in (Tables 2 and 3)": While these findings are not presented in Tables 2 and 3. Correct it!
- It would be better if you present the data in "Acute dysphagia" and "Late toxicities" subtitles in a separate table.
* Improvement in quality of life associated with dysphagia
- Change the format of the "status quo" to the italic.
** Discussion
- "Our study despite its limitations in a way re-affirms the superiority of modern techniques like VMAT translating into a better QOL for the patients"
How did you conclude this, while the study just included one arm (i.e. VMAT)?

Thanks.

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision (1)** 24 Feb 2020

Dear EIC,
Regarding the submitted manuscript entitled " Swallowing outcomes post Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy for head and neck cancer patients using MD Anderson Dysphagia Inventory: An institutional experience" the authors meticulously corrected the comments of the previous reviewer. However, there are many existing errors that are expected to be corrected prior to acceptance. In my opinion, it needs minor revisions.
Thanks.

REFEREE: EIC | **Revision (1)** 29 Feb 2020

Dear Author,
According to the comments of the reviewer and associate editor, please revise your manuscript and resubmit it.
Kind regards.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

01-03-2020

Respected Sir/Madam,

Thank you for reviewing the manuscript titled “Swallowing outcomes post Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy for head and neck cancer patients using MD Anderson Dysphagia Inventory: An institutional experience”. As required I have mentioned below point wise answers to the queries raised by you, kindly consider going through the same

1.General
- Try to correct many typographical and grammatical errors.
for example in "Target Volume Delineation", Line 7:
"were prescribed to a dose of 66-70 Gy,59.4Gy and 56 Gy respectively"
There are two missed commas prior to "and" and "respectively".

Ans: The typographical error mentioned and other grammatical errors have been corrected as pointed out.

2. Introduction
- Describe more about the data shortage regarding the radiation toxicity assessment of head and neck cancer. In other words, highlight the importance of your research in filling the gap in the literature.

Ans : We have mentioned the need for the study as highlighted by the reviewer

3 Put reference for this: "Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) has been adopted by many centers for the curative treatment of locally advanced head and neck cancers. The greatest benefit is achieving a steep dose gradient which translates into a better therapeutic ratio".

Ans:A reference for the above mentioned statement has been added.

4.Methods and Materials
Put the reference: "The dose constraints for organs at risk (OARs)were set-pharyngeal constrictors (mean<45- 50Gy), larynx(mean<40Gy)and cervical oesophagus(mean<45-50Gy)."

Ans : A reference regarding the same has been added as suggested by the reviewer

5.Results
Dose-Volume characteristics
- " The overall mean doses to the constrictors, larynx and cervical oesophagus have been reported along with the individual subsites based doses in (Tables 2 and 3)": While these findings are not presented in the Tables 2 and 3. Correct it!

Ans : My sincere apologies for the same. The missing tables have been added and correctly re-numbered .

6. It would be better if you present the data in "Acute dysphagia" and "Late toxicities" subtitles in a separate table.

Ans: The data for "Acute dysphagia" and "Late toxicities" is now presented in a table as suggested by the reviewer

7. Improvement in quality of life associated with dysphagia
- Change the format of the "status quo" to the italic.

Ans : The format has been changed to italic as suggested.

8.Discussion
- "Our study despite its limitations in a way re-affirms the superiority of modern techniques like VMAT translating into a better QOL for the patients"
How did you conclude this, while the study just included one arm (i.e. VMAT)?

Ans : Dear sir / madam, as you have rightly pointed out this generalization is not appropriate.
We have now rephrased the sentence to reflect what we really wanted to convey.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (2) 25 Mar 2020

Dear EIC
Based on the authors' answers to the reviewers' comments, the reviewer(s) have recommended publication.
Kind regards.

REFEREE: EIC | **Revision** (2) 1 Apr 2020

Dear Author,
The document is reviewed carefully by the reviewers. According to their comments and your revisions as requested, this manuscript is accepted.
Thanks.