Reviewer Assessment **Open Access**

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Conventional and/or laparoscopic rectal cancer surgery: what is the current evidence?

DOI 10.1515/iss-2016-0006
Original submission May 24, 2016; revised submission Jul 11, 2016; accepted Aug 17, 2016

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Reviewers' Comments to Original Submission

Reviewer 1: anonymous

Jun 02, 2016

Reviewer Recommendation Term:	Reject
Overall Reviewer Manuscript Rating:	20

Custom Review Question(s)	Response
Is the subject area appropriate for you?	5 - High/Yes
Does the title clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the abstract clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Do the keywords clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the introduction present the problem clearly?	3
Are the results/conclusions justified?	2
How comprehensive and up-to-date is the subject matter presented?	1 - Low/No
How adequate is the data presentation?	1 - Low/No
Are units and terminology used correctly?	3
Is the number of cases adequate?	3
Are the experimental methods/clinical studies adequate?	2
Is the length appropriate in relation to the content?	2
Does the reader get new insights from the article?	1 - Low/No
Please rate the practical significance.	1 - Low/No
Please rate the accuracy of methods.	2
Please rate the statistical evaluation and quality control.	1 - Low/No
Please rate the appropriateness of the figures and tables.	3
Please rate the appropriateness of the references.	2
Please evaluate the writing style and use of language.	4
Please judge the overall scientific quality of the manuscript.	1 - Low/No
Are you willing to review the revision of this manuscript?	**No**: Please see comments to editor

Comments to Author:
1. A formal meta-analysis should have been undertaken. **2.** The authors seem to have included a very selective few number of studies in their tables. They should have included all of the published literature in a proper systematic review. **3.** Although Table 2 includes the European, U.S., and Australasian randomized controlled trials it does not include the COREAN trial. **4.** Although both the North American and Australasian trials failed to show non-inferiority of the laparoscopic approach, the European trial showed advantages as did the COREAN trial. Unfortunately the authors reached a very imbalanced conclusion because of their selective inclusion of only manuscripts seemingly supporting their own bias.

Reviewer 2: anonymous

Jun 14, 2016

Reviewer Recommendation Term:	Accept
Overall Reviewer Manuscript Rating:	N/A

Custom Review Question(s)	Response
Is the subject area appropriate for you?	5 - High/Yes
Does the title clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the abstract clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Do the keywords clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the introduction present the problem clearly?	5 - High/Yes
Are the results/conclusions justified?	5 - High/Yes
How comprehensive and up-to-date is the subject matter presented?	5 - High/Yes
How adequate is the data presentation?	5 - High/Yes
Are units and terminology used correctly?	5 - High/Yes
Is the number of cases adequate?	N/A
Are the experimental methods/clinical studies adequate?	5 - High/Yes
Is the length appropriate in relation to the content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the reader get new insights from the article?	5 - High/Yes
Please rate the practical significance.	5 - High/Yes
Please rate the accuracy of methods.	N/A
Please rate the statistical evaluation and quality control.	N/A
Please rate the appropriateness of the figures and tables.	5 - High/Yes
Please rate the appropriateness of the references.	5 - High/Yes
Please evaluate the writing style and use of language.	5 - High/Yes
Please judge the overall scientific quality of the manuscript.	4
Are you willing to review the revision of this manuscript?	Yes

Comments to Author:
The manuscript summarizes the current evidence on laparoscopic and open surgery for rectal cancer. All major trials and meta-analyses are included and critically discussed. Special focus is laid on large trials published in recent years and their data and conclusions are critically reviewed. The manuscript provides the reader with an up to date overview of the current literature on the comparison between open and laparoscopic rectal surgery and helps him to interpret the available evidence. It is very well written, concise and comprehensive as well as easy to follow and understand. I highly recommend the publication as it is.

Reviewer 3: anonymous

Jun 18, 2016

Reviewer Recommendation Term:	Revise with Major Modifications
Overall Reviewer Manuscript Rating:	60

Custom Review Question(s)	Response
Is the subject area appropriate for you?	4
Does the title clearly reflect the paper's content?	2
Does the abstract clearly reflect the paper's content?	2
Do the keywords clearly reflect the paper's content?	3
Does the introduction present the problem clearly?	3
Are the results/conclusions justified?	2
How comprehensive and up-to-date is the subject matter presented?	3
How adequate is the data presentation?	3
Are units and terminology used correctly?	N/A
Is the number of cases adequate?	3
Are the experimental methods/clinical studies adequate?	N/A
Is the length appropriate in relation to the content?	3
Does the reader get new insights from the article?	2
Please rate the practical significance.	4
Please rate the accuracy of methods.	1 - Low/No
Please rate the statistical evaluation and quality control.	2
Please rate the appropriateness of the figures and tables.	4
Please rate the appropriateness of the references.	4
Please evaluate the writing style and use of language.	1 - Low/No
Please judge the overall scientific quality of the manuscript.	2
Are you willing to review the revision of this manuscript?	Yes

Comments to Author:

The authors worked out data on laparoscopic vs. open rectal resection in cancer patients from systematic reviews, metaanalyses and (prospective?) randomized trials, published between 2008 and 2015. In conclusion no substantial advantage for the laparoscopic procedure was found
The design of the manuscript is imprecise. Methods about the selection of publications are not mentioned. Meta-analyses are merged with retrospective studies. Are there redundancies of reports within the pool of "systematic reviews and meta-analyses"? A formal discussion is missing. Only one of the reported publications is debated (Bonjer HJ et al. NEJM 2015) in this paper.
Finally the authors are noting: "Analysing the same group of data, Chand et al recognized no clear scientific . . .". Did Chand refer to the same reports selected for this manuscript?
The English text is difficult to read. Some terms are at least uncommon. A proofreading, preferably by a native speaking surgeon, is strongly recommended. The manuscript could gain in quality after revision.

Authors' Response to Reviewers Comments

Jul 11, 2016

Thank you for your revision, your corrections made our paper significantly more valuable.

We tried to include all your suggestions in the body of the manuscript. All corrections were placed in blue and bold.

We added the section were we described the selection of data.

Our study had not been planned as typical systematic review thus the selection covered results of previously published papers and separately papers published during last year, cause we aimed to

emphasise current status of our knowledge about laparoscopic approach to rectal cancer.

We added short section to introduction section to clarify our aims. In addition one sentence in the abstract has also been changed.

In our paper we tried to shortly discuss quoted results directly after their presentation, for the reason we waived separate discussion section. However at the end of the paper our point of view has been stated.

The sentence :"Analysing the same group of data, Chand et al. recognized no clear scientific …." has been changed. Actually Chand et al. reviewed data for similar analyses however not the same group of data.

The manuscript has been reviewed and corrected by English native speaker and linguistic chances were placed in the body of the manuscript.

I would like to thank you again for your valuable review. Now we find our manuscript at significantly higher scientific level.

Reviewers' Comments to Revision

Reviewer 2: anonymous

May 27, 2016

Reviewer Recommendation Term:	Accept
Overall Reviewer Manuscript Rating:	80

Custom Review Question(s)	Response
Is the subject area appropriate for you?	5 - High/Yes
Does the title clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the abstract clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Do the keywords clearly reflect the paper's content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the introduction present the problem clearly?	4
Are the results/conclusions justified?	4
How comprehensive and up-to-date is the subject matter presented?	4
How adequate is the data presentation?	5 - High/Yes
Are units and terminology used correctly?	5 - High/Yes
Is the number of cases adequate?	5 - High/Yes
Are the experimental methods/clinical studies adequate?	5 - High/Yes
Is the length appropriate in relation to the content?	5 - High/Yes
Does the reader get new insights from the article?	5 - High/Yes
Please rate the practical significance.	4
Please rate the accuracy of methods.	3
Please rate the statistical evaluation and quality control.	N/A
Please rate the appropriateness of the figures and tables.	5 - High/Yes
Please rate the appropriateness of the references.	4
Please evaluate the writing style and use of language.	3
Please judge the overall scientific quality of the manuscript.	4
Are you willing to review the revision of this manuscript?	Yes

Comments to Author:

The paper has definitely profited from the revision. It is a very concise summary and critical appraisal of the recent evidence on open / laparoscopic surgery for rectal cancer. It will be interesting and attractive for the readers of this new journal.

Reviewer 3: anonymous

May 13, 2016

Reviewer Recommendation Term:	Reject
Overall Reviewer Manuscript Rating:	N/A

Custom Review Question(s)	Response
Is the subject area appropriate for you?	3
Does the title clearly reflect the paper's content?	2
Does the abstract clearly reflect the paper's content?	3
Do the keywords clearly reflect the paper's content?	3
Does the introduction present the problem clearly?	3
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Please rate the appropriateness of the references.	3
Please evaluate the writing style and use of language.	2
Please judge the overall scientific quality of the manuscript.	1 - Low/No
Are you willing to review the revision of this manuscript?	**No**: see comments to editor

Comments to Author:

After revision, the quality of the manuscript unfortunately has not significantly improved. It remains unclear, if all reports, having been published within 2008 and 2015 have been included. If not, it must be stated, why one or another publication was not considered for the paper. Unclear is also, why the search within the literature was based on different terms for the first and the second period of observation.

After every summary of the different trials, a short comment was added in the revised version. This is not comparable to a critical discussion, which would be expected in scientific journals. The authors are relying on "our point of view at the end of the paper", which is thought to be equal to a formal discussion.

In conclusion there is still substantial work needed for enhancing the scientific level of the manuscript.

Decision Letter from the Editor in Chief

Aug 17, 2016

Ref.: Ms. No. ISS-D-16-00018R1
Conventional and/or Laparoscopic Rectal Cancer Surgery - What is the Current Evidence?
Innovative Surgical Sciences

Dear Prof Dziki,
I am pleased to tell you that your work has now been accepted for publication in Innovative Surgical

Sciences.

Despite two reviewers who rejected the manuscript I, the Editor-in-Chief decided to accept the paper. The manuscript gives a topical overview on open and laparoscopic surgery for rectal cancer. The paper is not intended to present new data but rather to give a review of current evidence.

Additionally with this decision we would like to encourage our readers to submit Letters to the Editor with comments on that paper. This may be a first step towards open and public peer review processes once a manuscript is published. We look forward on your comments to: ISS.Editorial@degruytero.com

Comments from Reviewers can be found below.

Thank you for submitting your work to this journal.

With kind regards
Prof Dr Joachim Jaehne
Editor in Chief
Innovative Surgical Sciences
www.degruyter.com/view/j/iss

Reviewers' comments:
Reviewer #2: The paper has definitely profited from the revision. It is a very concise summary and critical appraisal of the recent evidence on open / laparoscopic surgery for rectal cancer. It will be interesting and attractive for the readers of this new journal.

Reviewer #3: After revision, the quality of the manuscript unfortunately has not significantly improved. It remains unclear, if all reports, having been published within 2008 and 2015 have been included. If not, it must be stated, why one or another publication was not considered for the paper. Unclear is also, why the search within the literature was based on different terms for the first and the second period of observation.
After every summary of the different trials, a short comment was added in the revised version. This is not comparable to a critical discussion, which would be expected in scientific journals. The authors are relying on "our point of view at the end of the paper", which is thought to be equal to a formal discussion.
In conclusion there is still substantial work needed for enhancing the scientific level of the manuscript.