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February 28, 2017

Prof Lian-Sheng Ma
Company Editor-in Chief,
Baishideng Publishing Group Inc

Dear Sir,

Re: Manuscript ID #: 32399; Entitled: “Recent Advances in the Management of Rectal Cancer: No surgery, minimal surgery or minimally invasive surgery”

First, I would like to thank you for your review of this manuscript and for the mostly positive feedback. These comments were taken into account and appropriated actions to improve the quality of the manuscript. The manuscript has been revised and is hereby resubmitted for publication. The changes made are outlined below and are marked in the ‘tracked’ version.

Comments by Reviewer # 03253495: This reviewer cited the role of rectal endoscopic ultrasound and its role in defining accurately the T-stage of rectal cancers, especially at the early invasive stage. This was addressed on page 6 lines 6-8 and page 7, lines 2-4 and now also with the inclusion of reference number 20 which was added.

Comments by Reviewer # 03258012: Comments included the quality of the scientific language. This was revised where possible throughout the manuscript for improved quality. A figure was also added. A section on standard surgery was not included as while these approaches were mentioned in the introduction, they were not the focus of this manuscript. The addition of these sections would only increase the length and reduce the focus of article.

Comments by Reviewer # 03017544: This reviewer had mostly minor points. However, the questions being asked are the very same ones we concluded were outstanding and needed further clarification from ongoing studies. Therefore it is difficult for us to state international indications to perform these approaches to rectal cancer given the quality evidence currently available in the literature. There results of Habr-Gama and others plus the role of surgery, chemoradiotherapy and surveillance protocols for patients are stated on page 9, last paragraph and page 10.

Response to comments by reviewer #03258070: The comments of this reviewer were examined and appreciated with the inclusion of a statement on the improved functional outcome of patients treated with robotic rectal resection with respect to genitourinary functions. Reference number 68 was now added in

support of this. Our manuscript was also corrected for giving the false impression that the final results of the ROLARR study was published, and the correct reference about this study now also added.

Comments by Reviewer # 2988793: Page 5 paragraph 2 on laparoscopic rectal cancer surgery is modified to reduce the impression of a poorer outcome on laparoscopic rectal cancer surgery. Hence the phrase ‘unacceptably high’ in describing circumferential margin positivity was removed. The reviewer should note that the reference quoted was published after this manuscript was drafted, and it was therefore not included. In the section under ‘Minimal Surgery’ we acknowledge that some patients long-term outcome may be compromised with an initial local excision, and a new reference (Reference number 50) is now included in support of this statement. In the section under ‘Minimally invasive surgery’ we have modified the statement about surgeon fatigue, to “may be advantageous” rather than “is of advantage”. Finally we believe that we have outlined the limitations of each approach in their section, hence a chapter on the limitations of the review may not be necessary.

We would like to thank Reviewer # 00505458 for their kind comments.

The references: new references (numbers 20, 47, 50, 67 and 69) have been added and the relevant modifications done throughout the manuscript because of these changes.

The tables: Each table was altered to include the reference numbers.

The manuscript has also been revised throughout to improve the quality of the scientific discourse. All authors have contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

We believe that the information contained in this revised version will be relevant to your readers and the manuscript is now suitable for publication in its current form.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joseph Plummer