LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Prediction of long-term cancer survival from a short-term data set?

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Prediction of long-term cancer survival from a short-term data set?

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The Editor,

Sir,


• As far as can be seen from literature, this publication provides the first possible evidence that long-term survival can be predicted (see tables 11 and 12) within a reasonable standard error. The models which have been developed by Mould et al can estimate long-term survival based only on a short-term observation period. They were tested to 25-year cancer-specific survival rates using Lederman’s Royal Marsden Hospital data for localized cancer of the glottic larynx stages T1-T3, and for SEER data to 20-year rates for defined subsets of cancers of the prostate, bladder, tongue, cervix uteri, breast and thyroid (see appendix D). The paper validated the modelling methodology for only a single series per cancer site. The question now is whether the parameters chosen are valid for further cancer types and for additional series for the seven sites already tested.

• The second part of the paper (see tables 13–15) deals with cancer cure. Mould et al compared the survival rate pattern of cured cancer of the larynx patients to the survival rate pattern of the normal population. They found, and this is the astonishing message, that ‘they do not tend to die of other conditions at a higher than normal rate’. Is this true for all types of cancer? This statement must be checked very closely. If this is widely true, then it is an excellent message for all cancer patients.

Nevertheless, both the above features must be studied and examined using data from other institutions having a long-term follow-up available, and for other cancers than those of the larynx, in order to prove or to disprove Mould’s results for further patient series.

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