

Peer Review File

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Review Comments on ATM-23-292

Reviewer A

COMMENT #1: This manuscript is an important and valuable review for lymphedema post breast surgery.

RESPNSE #1: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENT #2: However, this is not an acceptable to the journal with the current form. I hope to need major revision.

RESPNSE #2: Thank you for your comment. We tried the best we could to address the reviewer's suggestions.

COMMENT #3: Result: Could you create a table which contained each author, CRR, and significant difference (p) from reviewed references? It will be better that readers can compare among VLA, VLNT and others.

RESPNSE #3: Thank you for your comment. Thank you for your comment. We deleted some of the tables and we added tables summarizing outcomes of the studies evaluated.

COMMENT #4: In this manuscript, "paradoxical expression" (e.g. despite.) was heavily used. It has been difficult to read, you should change the words or context.

RESPNSE #4: Thank you for your comment. We corrected what the reviewer suggested.

Reviewer B

COMMENT #1: This is a reasonable review although could be helped with Tables summarising the key publications for quicker interpretation by readers. Some of the tables are probably not necessary (e.g staging systems).

RESPNSE #1: Thank you for your comment. We deleted some of the tables and we added tables summarizing outcomes of the studies evaluated.

COMMENT #2: I am surprised that none of the seminal work by Hakan Brorson is referenced.

RESPNSE #2: Thank you for your comment. We addressed the reviewer's concerns. Dr. Hakan Brorson was referenced several times.

COMMENT #3: Figure 1 should include a reference to sentinel node biopsy for completeness.

RESPNSE #3: Thank you for your comment. We addressed the reviewer's recommendation accordingly.

COMMENT #4: My only comment is that it is a very dense document - it would be very much helped with some tables.

RESPNSE #4: Thank you for your comment. We deleted some of the tables and we added tables summarizing outcomes of the studies evaluated.

Reviewer C

COMMENT #1: I am very thankful to the author for addressing a very interesting topic which is the “Surgical Management of Breast Cancer-Related Lymphedema”, I can see his great effort in this work, the introduction was well written, and the results are comprehensively described, also he focused on both the prevention and the treatment of BCRL.

RESPNSE #1: Thank you for your comment.

My major concerns regarding this review are the following:

COMMENT #2: This is a review of literature which consider very low in evidence-based medicine and has low impact in decision making.

RESPNSE #2: Thank you for your comment. The reviewer is right. Narrative reviews do not allow direct comparison between studies. Narrative review uses written paragraphs to describe the results of the included research (hence the name).

They do not conduct any pooled analyses using the data from the studies summarized. This prevents pooled analysis and therefore prevents true objectivity.

Instead, narrative review functions as a pooled resource of the dominant opinions at the time of publication. This can be an adequate way to get a high-level understanding of a body of evidence. However, it does not provide any assurance that the dominant opinions are correct as it does not fully explore the alternative hypothesis.

<https://traversescience.com/review/best-style-of-review/>

We amplified our limitations section so readers can be aware of the reviewers concern.

COMMENT #3: The methodology was very concise especially if we compare it with the described results in the article.

RESPNSE #3: Thank you for your comment. According to the editorial office, a Narrative review type of article was requested for this study. **Narrative reviews are not replicable or verifiable.** Narrative reviews typically do not describe their methods for selecting and reviewing literature. Therefore, verifying or replicating their results is impossible.

This puts narrative review at odds with scientific evidence in a fundamental way. The scientific method enables replication such that anyone can conduct the same work and achieve roughly the same result. However, since methods are not reported in narrative reviews, it is impossible to replicate the search.

Taking into consideration what we mentioned above, we decided to improve the quality of the article and described how we conducted the search of relevant literature. Please, be aware this manuscript is not a systematic review and must not be judged or evaluated as such.

According to the journal guidelines, this information was included: “Specify the process for identifying the literature search (eg, years considered, language, publication status, study design, and databases of coverage).”

COMMENT #4: There was insufficient Mesh words and Free words in his search strategy, which limit the number of the included articles and lower search sensitivity.

RESPNSE #4: Thank you for your comment. We decided to use free words because we believe more articles are retrieved with this method, hence, decreasing the risk of bias. For instance, the search strategies below demonstrate that when using free words for the same type of search, an increased number of articles is retrieved.

"Breast Cancer Lymphedema"[Mesh]: 404 Results.

("Lymphedema"[Mesh]) AND ("Breast Neoplasms"[Mesh]): 2329 Results

(Breast) AND (Cancer) AND (Lymphedema): 3918 Results

COMMENT #5: Although it is a review of literature, I would recommend the author to follow the PRISMA Chart to broaden his search scope and to avoid selection bias, which prevent the missing of important articles that may affect the study results.

RESPNSE #5: Thank you for your comment. For most points discussed in this narrative review, we present an argument and a counter-argument. Furthermore, we included more than 80 articles in our manuscript, which denotes the wide spectrum of results found and evaluated during the creation of this narrative review.

Please, be aware this manuscript is not a systematic review and must not be judged or evaluated as such. However, we added a flowchart to be as compliant as possible with the reviewer’s request.

COMMENT #6: The selected studies were not assessed according to their quality which decrease the validity of these studies.

RESPNSE #6: Thank you for your comment. We added the level of evidence of different statement according to the articles evaluated in this review. Please, be aware this manuscript is not a systematic review and must not be judged or evaluated as such.

Therefore, we did not describe methods used to assess risk of bias due to missing results in a synthesis (arising from reporting biases). We did not specify methods used to assess risk of bias in the included studies, including details of the tool(s) used, how many reviewers assessed each study and whether they worked independently, and if applicable, details of automation tools used in the process.

These procedures are out of the scope of a systematic review.

COMMENT #7: The results in the article were comprehensively described, which goes beyond the main objective of the study, also, it shows that it is influenced by the author personal experiences and opinion.

RESPNSE #7: Thank you for your comment. The reviewer is right. We added the reviewer's remark in the limitation segment. Please, note that we also provide counter-arguments to make present data in a very objective way.

COMMENT #8: The conclusion did not add anything for me as a reader, and since this is a review of literature it is very limited in practical use for informed decision making.

RESPNSE #8: Thank you for your comment. The reviewer is right. Narrative reviews do not allow direct comparison between studies. Narrative review uses written paragraphs to describe the results of the included research (hence the name). They do not conduct any pooled analyses using the data from the studies summarized. This prevents pooled analysis and therefore prevents true objectivity. *Instead, narrative review functions as a pooled resource of the dominant opinions at the time of publication.* This can be an adequate way to get a high-level understanding of a body of evidence. However, it does not provide any assurance that the dominant opinions are correct as it does not fully explore the alternative hypothesis.

COMMENT #9: The specific conclusion of combined therapy outcome shouldn't be withdrawn in this work; general conclusions are preferable in these kinds of reviews.

RESPNSE #9: Thank you for your comment. We eliminated what the reviewer suggested.

COMMENT #10: I recommend the author to conduct or at least to admit the need of a better- and high-quality reviews like systematic reviews or scoping reviews.

RESPNSE #10: Thank you for your comment. The reviewer is right. We added several statements in our LIMITAITONS section acknowledging several weaknesses and limitations of this study,

COMMENT #11: Finally, the keywords in the abstract are not necessarily to be Mesh words, but Mesh word will add more value if you use it in your search strategy.

RESPNSE #11: Thank you for your comment. We addressed the reviewers concerns.

Review Comments on ATM-23-292-R1

COMMENT #1: Many thanks to the authors for addressing our concerns and modifying the article accordingly, I think by now the article needs minor review.

RESPONSE #1: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENT #2: I have some few comments that would improve the article and facilitate the reader to understand the objectives and the study design:

RESPONSE #2: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENT #3: The author thankfully added the study design in the title, but it should be also mentioned in the abstract and the introduction text using the word “narrative review” or “review of literature” so the readers can understand the study design.

RESPONSE #3: Thank you for your comment. We performed the modifications suggested by the reviewer.

COMMENT #4: The number of the selected studies should be mentioned earlier in the article text, also there is a discrepancy between the number of the selected studies in the limitation (97) and in the flow diagram (99 studies).

RESPONSE #4: Thank you for your comment. We addressed the mistake we did on the text.

COMMENT #5: In the limitation part, the author said that he conducted critical appraisal of the results! But it was not done in the text of the article, and in case that they did, the methods critical appraisal criteria that they have used should be mentioned, I guess it was written by error, but it is extremely important to point out that they did not conduct critical appraisal, although they address the level of evidence of many of the selected studies.

RESPONSE #5: Thank you for your comment. We performed the modifications suggested by the reviewer.

COMMENT #6: In the conclusion, before addressing the need of high quality RCTs, I believe that it should be admitted first the need of high-quality reviews like systematic reviews or scoping reviews, which could provide a better conclusion and introduce less risk of bias in the results.

RESPONSE #6: Thank you for your comment. We performed the modifications suggested by the reviewer.

COMMENT #7: Ethical approval is usually not required in review articles; therefore, it is not required to submit the ethical approval statement for the procedures conducted in other studies.

RESPONSE #7: Thank you for your comment. According to the rules of the journals and the author guidelines, a statement of ethical approval must be incorporated in the manuscript.