

## **Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Effects of total laryngectomy on olfactory function, health-related quality of life, and communication: a 3-year follow-up study

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**Reviewer:** Frans Hilgers

### **Reviewer's report:**

Not very often in recent months I have reviewed a manuscript that is so well written and so mature as this paper by Risberg-Berlin at al. describing their very well conducted long-term follow-up study of olfaction rehabilitation in laryngectomized individuals. Not only the authors studied their intervention group, but also did they compare these to a well-matched radiotherapy treated larynx cancer control group and even with reference data available for the general population. This resulted in the now also long-term well-documented observation that the sense of smell is a major contributor to the HRQL of laryngectomized patients. Based on their results the authors have broadened the basis for their recommendation that "olfactory testing and training with NAIM should be integrated into the multidisciplinary rehabilitation program after total laryngectomy". Furthermore, as a second valuable observation they rightfully conclude that their "results show the need to use additional questionnaires to the EORTC questionnaires when evaluating specific functions such as olfaction and communication in laryngectomized patients".

The description of the results and the statistical analysis are flawless and I have no other comments than some typographical suggestions, i.e. when using abbreviations for the first time they should be written in full followed by the abbreviation within brackets (e.g. in the background section on page 5 QOTA and S-SECEL). These come back later, but they should be mentioned here in full as well. In the results section when referring to the question number of the various questionnaires a somewhat odd Delta sign is used, and I would suggest using either Q or just 'question number'.

I highly recommend his paper for publishing in BMC Ear, Nose and Throat Disorders.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.