

Review of: "Tocilizumab Plus Corticosteroid in Elderly Patients Hospitalized With COVID-19 Pneumonia: A Retrospective Cohort Study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is very interesting and well written. It enlightens an issue often neglected: the efficacy and the side effects of drugs in elderly population. I totally agree with the authors that Tocilizumab has not proven to be a game changer in the fight against covid-19.

I have only few comments about the paper. I am not a statistic but the author esteem a in-between group difference of 40% in the primary outcome. Giving that the previous trials on tocilizumab failed in many cases to find statistical significance in patients treated or not treated, i think that 40% is an exaggerated figure. Therefore I presume that the study population may be under powered.

Then I cannot see the point of excluding patients with respiratory diseases. It is an arbitrary decision to remove one of the risk factor of poor outcome and to maintain others, equally important.

My last consideration is about the conclusion. The treatment group was on higher support of oxygen. We can consider the need of oxygen as a surrogate of the severity of the disease. Therefore patients treated with tocilixumab were probably sicker than those in the desamethasone alone group. This difference may partially explain the increased mortality in people treated with tocilizumab.