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Primary Sjögren's Syndrome

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Delli, K. (2017). *Primary Sjögren's Syndrome: towards a new era in diagnosis, treatment and e-patient education*. University of Groningen.

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Chapter 3B

Comment on 'Diagnostic accuracies of sialography and salivary ultrasonography in Sjögren's syndrome patients: a meta-analysis' by Song and Lee (2014)

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Edited version of: Clin Exp Rheumatol. 2015;33:293.

With great interest we have read the recently published meta-analysis by Song and Lee [1] in your journal regarding the diagnostic properties of sialography and salivary ultrasonography in Sjögren's Syndrome (SS) patients. A systematic review and meta-analysis on this topic has been lacking so far from the literature and, thus, eagerly expected. We would like to express some concerns regarding Table 1 of their study in relation to the study outcomes. There seems to be a discrepancy between the data shown in the meta-analysis and the data presented by the source studies [2-7], viz.:

1. In the study of Tagaki et al. 2010 [2], the number of cases with SS is 188 as opposed to 177 reported by Song and Lee [1].
2. In the study of Obinata et al. 2010 [3], the number of cases with SS is 36 as opposed to 32 reported by Song and Lee [1].
3. In the study of Poul et al. 2008 [4], which is erroneously cited as Poul et al. 2009, the number of cases with SS is 45 as opposed to 32 reported by Song and Lee [1].
4. In the study of Salaffi et al. 2008 [5], the number of cases with SS is 77 as opposed to 68 reported by Song and Lee [1].
5. In the study of Yonetsu et al. 2002 [6], the number of cases is 171 as opposed to 151 reported by Song and Lee [1].
6. In the study of Yoshiura et al. 1997 [7], the number of cases with SS is 24 as opposed to 23 and the number of controls is 40 and 41 depending on the diagnostic technique tested, as opposed to 21 reported by Song and Lee [1].

Additionally, summing the numbers of true positive, true negatives, false positives and false negatives in Table 1 of Song and Lee's paper does not add up to the same numbers [1]. It is possible that the data set was not complete for every participant in the source studies. See, e.g., the study of Yoshiura et al. 1997, in which data of 2 control groups were used with different numbers for sialography and ultrasonography [7]. Furthermore, some source studies do not report the number of true positives, true negatives, false positives and false negatives. If Song and Lee calculated the number of true positives, true negatives, false positives and false negatives on basis of the reported sensitivity and specificity of the source populations, it is essential that the correct number of participants with SS and the number of controls in the various studies is entered in the calculations [1]. Finally, Song and Lee report that discrepancies between reviewers were resolved by consensus or a third reviewer [1]. However, they fail to present who the third reviewer was (it might be that there were no discrepancies that could not be resolved by consensus, so there was no need for a third reviewer) and do not report inter-observer agreement measures.

We were wondering which numbers were entered in the statistical program to perform the meta-analyses, since these numbers influence the outcome of the study. We would appreciate if the authors could comment on the above raised issues.

Table 1: Overview of the data presented in the source publications and the data presented by Song and Lee.

Source publications	Data from source papers				Data reported by Song and Lee (2014)				Sialography				Ultrasonography				
	SS	CO	SUM SS and CO		SS	CO	SUM SS and CO	TP	FP	FN	TN	SUM sialography	TP	FP	FN	TN	SUM ultrasonography
	Takagi et al., 2010	188	172	360	177	172	349	146	31	42	141	360	154	50	34	122	360
Obinata et al., 2010	36	37	73	32	37	69	30	2	6	35	73	28	8	8	29	73	
Poul et al., 2008	45	15	60	37	15	52	35	2	10	13	60	38	4	7	11	60	
Salaffi et al., 2008	77	79	156	68	79	147	56	12	21	67	156	58	13	19	66	156	
Yonetsu et al., 2002	171	123	294	151	123	274	149	2	30	121	302	130	7	41	116	294	
Yoshiura et al., 1997				23	21	44											
-Sialography	24	40*	64				23	0	1	21	45						
-Ultrasonography	24	41**	65									11	1	13	21	46	

SS: Sjögren syndrome patients, CO: Controls, TP: true positive, FP: False positive, FN: False negative, TN: True negative, *:19 with nonspecific parotitis and 21 healthy volunteers, **: 19 nonspecific parotitis and 20 healthy volunteers.

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