



**Comment on: External validation of a prognostic model to predict survival of patients with sentinel node-negative melanoma**

*Editor*

We have read with great interest the article by Ipenburg *et al.*<sup>1</sup>. This study externally validated the developed prognostic European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) model predicting risk of recurrence and melanoma-specific mortality in patients with sentinel-node negative melanoma<sup>2</sup>. As the models appeared well calibrated and showed good performance in 4235 patients from the Melanoma Institute Australia, the authors confirmed the prognostic accuracy.

We would like to point out some relevant findings. First, the authors demonstrated that the EORTC models were reproducible in an independent non-European population, thereby confirming the generalizability. Performance in terms of the concordance index was lower in external validation (0.69 for both the recurrence and melanoma-specific mortality model compared with 0.74 and 0.76 in the European population) but may be explained by differences in clinicopathological variables (e.g. more head and neck melanomas) and possibly patterns of clinical care. Second, distribution of patients across the risk groups was reasonably balanced (20 per cent low risk, 46 per cent intermediate risk and 34 per cent high risk) and the Kaplan–Meier plots showed distinct survival curves, indicating the clinical usefulness. Third, the possible additional value of several factors that could not be sufficiently tested in the EORTC models was examined, including mitotic rate and regression. The latter factor did not show independent prognostic value, and the extended model including mitotic rate among others showed only marginally improved performance.

In conclusion, the EORTC nomogram is a validated easy-applicable tool

predicting recurrence and melanoma-specific mortality in patients with sentinel-node negative melanoma. Accurately identifying high-risk patients could aid in selecting candidates for adjuvant therapy. To facilitate its use, an online calculator has been developed and can be accessed at <https://www.evidencio.com/models/show/1890>

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- 2 Verver D, van Klaveren D, Franke V, van Akkooi ACJ, Rutkowski P, Keilholz U *et al.* Development and validation of a nomogram to predict recurrence and melanoma-specific mortality in patients with negative sentinel lymph nodes. *Br J Surg* 2019; **106**: 217–225.