SURVIVAL RATE AND PROGNOSTIC FACTORS OF ESOPHAGEAL CANCER IN EAST AIZABERDAN PROVINCE, NORTH-WEST OF IRAN

Seyed Kazem Mirinezhad¹*, Mohammad Hossein Somi¹, Amir Ghasemi Jangjoo², Farshad Seyednezhad², Saeed Dastgiri³, Mohammad Mohammazadeh², Ali Reza Naseri³, Behnam Nasiri²

Abstract

Background: Esophageal cancer in Iran is the sixth most common cancer and is particularly important in east Azerbaijan. The aim of this study was to calculate survival rates and define prognostic factors in esophageal cancer patients. Methods: In this study, all patients with esophageal cancer registered in the Radiation Therapy Center, during March 2006 to March 2011, were analyzed and followed up for vital status. Data were analyzed using the Kaplan-Meier method and the Cox proportional hazard models. Results: Out of 532 patients, survival information was available for 460, including 205 (44.5%) females and 255 (55.4%) males. The mean age was 65.8±12.2, ranging from 29 to 90 years at the time of diagnosis. 1-, 3- and 5-year survival rates after diagnosis were 55%, 18% and 12%, respectively, with a median survival time of 13.2 ± 7.1 months. In the univariate analysis, age (P = 0.001), education (P = 0.001), smoking status (P = 0.001), surgery (P = 0.001), tumor differentiation (P = 0.003) and tumor stage (P = 0.001) were significant prognostic factors. Tumor morphology, sex, place of residence, tumor histology and tumor location did not show any significant effects on the survival rate. In multivariate analysis, age (P = 0.003), smoking (P = 0.01) and tumor stage (P = 0.001) were significant independent predictors of survival. Conclusion: In summary, prognosis of esophageal cancer in North West of Iran is poor. Therefore, reduction in exposure to risk factors and early detection should be emphasized to improve survival.

Keywords: Esophageal cancer - survival - prognosis - Kaplan-Meier - Cox proportional hazard model - Iran

Introduction

Esophageal cancer is the eighth most common cancer and the sixth leading cause of cancer mortality in the worldwide (Bashash et al., 2011). The north of Iran (lies in the central Asian belt) have been observed to dominate malignancies of esophageal cancer. The five-year survival is usually 13 percent (Ghadimi et al., 2011). East Azerbaijan is located in the north western Iran neighbor provinces around Caspian Sea. The esophageal cancer is one of the five most common cancers in East Azerbaijan, being the 3th most common cancer in females and the 4th most common in males (Somi et al., 2008). There have been no studies in this region on the survival statistics and prognostic factors of esophageal cancers. Esophageal cancer is one of the rapidly progressing tumors with a dismal prognosis (Hajian., 2001). The Survival of esophageal cancer is mainly determined by age of the patient and type of treatment (Aghchel et al., 2011). The aim of this study was to calculate the survival rates and analyze the factors affecting the patients’ prognosis in esophageal cancer.

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Table 2. The Cox Regression Model - Predictor Factors with 95% Confidence Intervals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Hazard ratio</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>95.0% Lower</th>
<th>95.0% Upper</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoker</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumor diff</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumor stag</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Out of 532 patients, survival information was available for 460 patients, including 205 (44.5%) Female and 255 (55.4%) males. The mean age was 65.8±12.2, ranging from 29 to 90 years at the time of diagnosis. Of these, at five years 148 (32.2%) were alive and 312 (67.8%) were dead after five years.

Survival and Univariate Analysis

Kaplan-Meier method showed that 1, 2, 3, 4- and 5-year survival rates after diagnosis were 55%, 26%, 18%, 13% and 12%, respectively. The Median survival time in patients 13.2 ± .7 (CI 95% =11.8 -14.6) months. Six prognostic factors were identified as significant by univariate analysis with the log-rank test p value : Age group (P = 0.001), education (P = 0.001), smoker (P = 0.001), surgery (P = 0.001), tumor differentiation (P = 0.003) and tumor stage (P = 0.001), univariate analysis revealed that sex (P = 0.07), place of residence (P= 0.07), tumor histology (P = 0.51) and tumor location (P= 0.31) were not significantly associated with survival. Table 1 summarized some other findings of the present study.

Chart 1- Kaplan - Meier shows the overall survival curves of esophageal cancer patients declining with time.

Results of Multivariate Analyses

Multivariate analysis of survival rates were performed according to the Cox proportional hazards model using six prognostic factors (Age group, education, smoker,
surgery, tumor differentiation and tumor stage) (Table 2). The Cox regression analysis, Age group (P = 0.003), smoker (P= 0/01) and tumor stage (P= 0/001) were significant predictors of survival. In the multivariate analysis education (P = 0/19), tumor differentiation (P = 0/05) and Surgery (P = 0/23) were not as predictor factors (Table 3).

Discussion

This study estimated the survival rate of patients with esophageal cancer for the first time from the East Azerbaijan -northwest region of Iran. The one, three and the five year survival rates in this study were 55%, 18% and 12% respectively which are superior than many other studies from northern Iran (Hajian, 2001; Samadi et al., 2007) but lower than developed countries. (Zafirellis et al., 2002; Cescon et al., 2007). This can be explained by the fact that Iranian patients generally seek a medical advice with a delay and the diagnosis is made when the disease has reached an advanced stage (Ghadimi et al., 2011).

The median survival was 13 months in the current study whereas the rate is less than 10 months in northern Iran (Samadi et al., 2007; Aghcheli et al., 2011; Ghadimi et al., 2011) and over 20 months in high income countries (Zafirellis et al., 2002; Cescon et al., 2007). This is reflected in the 1 and 3 year survival rates as well. Survival of esophageal cancer is influenced by several factors. Age of patients was one of the Predictive factors in the current study and was inversely associated with the survival rate, as in several studies (Hajian, 2001; Aldina et al., 2004; Shitara et al., 2010; Aghcheli et al., 2011; Ghadimi et al., 2011). The other factor was cigarette smoking which inversely predicted the survival. This is consistent with several studies (Sundelof et al., 2008; Cescon et al., 2009; Shitara et al., 2010). Female patients had a tendency to a better survival rate during time, but this difference did not reach the significance. This data is inconsistent in different reports. Some are consistent with the current study (Zafirellis et al., 2002; Taziki et al., 2011) while several studies report a significantly better survival rates for females (Bashash et al., 2008; Aghcheli et al., 2011; Gaur et al., 2011; Ghadimi et al., 2011). The radiotherapy center located in northern of Iran is almost new (Aghajanzadeh et al., 2009) and this may influence the outcome to some extent as urban patients might have difficulties reaching its service, so The survival rate of patients in urban areas is reported to be higher in northern of Iran (Aghcheli et al., 2011; Ghadimi et al., 2011). This was not observed in the current study. These ecological data demonstrate that the use of diagnostic and treatment services among men living in rural areas is equal to their urban counterparts, so their survival rate is the same. Their socioeconomic level may be responsible as well. Education information was recorded for 74% of the sample for this study. A low proportion was literate but we observed a significant positive association between education and survival. These findings are aligned with the results of many studies in this field (Katrin F et al., 2005; Hussain et al., 2008; Ghadimi et al., 2011). Considering that almost 60% of this sample were older than 65, this result may change in further years. The new generation may differ in terms of educational level and life style and the results may get closer to developed countries. The characteristics of the tumor were evaluated as well. The slightly had better survival of squamous cell carcinoma type did not reach the significance which is consistent with previous studies (Hajian, 2001). Tumor stage is the most important prognostic factor for any type of cancer as the planning for optimal treatment is mainly decided accordingly (Nomura et al., 2012). The results of the current study showed that the five year survival rate of our study sample was lower in stages II and IV compared to Netherlands, China and Japan (Christian et al., 2007; Shitara et al., 2010; Nomura et al., 2012) while the rate was higher in stage III compared to Netherlands, China and Germany (Rades et al., 2006; Christian et al., 2007; Shitara et al., 2010). In Conclusion, prognosis of esophageal cancer in North West of Iran is poor. Therefore, reduce the exposure to risk factors and early detection can improve survival in such patients.

Acknowledgements

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References


Table 3. Comparison of the Survival Rates from North of Iran, the Current Study and Reports from Developed Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Survival year %</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samadi et al., 2007/north western Iran/Ardabil</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aghcheli et al., 2011/northern Iran/Golestane</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taziki et al., 2011/northern Iran/Gorgan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajian, 2001/northern Iran/Babol</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghadimi et al., 2011/northern Iran/Babol</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current study/north western Iran/Tabriz</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zafirellis et al., 2002/UK</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian et al., 2007/Netherlands</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Incidence Area.
population-based experience in British Columbia, Canada. 
BMC Cancer, 11, 164.


