

COMPREHENSIVE GERIATRIC ASSESSMENT IN ELDERLY CANCER PATIENTS: AN EXPERIENCE IN AN OUTPATIENT POPULATION

Ermenegildo Arnoldi¹, Maria Dieli², Marina Mangia², Bruno Minetti², and Roberto Labianca¹

¹Oncology Department and ²Internal Medicine Department, Ospedali Riuniti, Bergamo, Italy

Aims and background: Cancer is an age-related disease, and the increase in life expectancy will lead to a progressive increase of cancer cases in the elderly (≥ 70 years of age). We have created a group called GONG (Gruppo Oncologico Geriatrico) to apply cancer geriatric assessment in elderly cancer patients, in order to select which of them are eligible for oncological treatment or supportive care only.

Patients and methods: We applied this model to evaluate 153 patients from March 2004 to August 2005. Our model included three categories of patients: frail (at least one of the following items: Activities of Daily Living scale < 80 , ≥ 3 comorbidities unrelated to the tumor according to the Charlson Index, performance status $\leq 60/\geq 3$ according respectively to Karnofsky and the ECOG scale, ≥ 1 geriatric syndrome); borderline (pa-

tients with multiple comorbidities not affecting performance status or ability in daily activities); non-frail.

Results: Applying the aforementioned criteria, we found 30 borderline, 14 frail and 109 non-frail patients. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference in mortality between frail and non-frail patients ($P < 0.05$), whereas there was no difference between borderline and non-frail patients.

Conclusions: Our model was thus able to identify patients at higher risk of death. These results confirm the importance of cancer geriatric assessment also for the clinical evaluation of oncological patients. Additional randomized studies with a larger number of patients, also in an adjuvant setting, should be performed to confirm the effectiveness of this approach.

Key words: cancer, comprehensive geriatric assessment, elderly.

Acknowledgments: We thank Dr Bruno Minetti, Chief of the Internal Medicine Department, who recently died, for his great interest in elderly cancer patients, his catching enthusiasm and for the care in the establishment of this cooperation with the Oncology Department for a better approach to this category of patients.

Correspondence to: Dr Ermenegildo Arnoldi, Oncology Department, Ospedali Riuniti, Largo Barozzi 1, 24100 Bergamo, Italy. Tel +39-035-269724; fax +39-035-266849; e-mail earnoldi@ospedaliriuniti.bergamo.it

Received June 21, 2006; accepted September 27, 2006.