



Could sentinel lymph node biopsy be exempted for ductal carcinoma in situ after mastectomy?

Jiqiao Yang¹ · Qing Lv¹

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To The Editor,

I want to congratulate Dr. Watanabe et al. for their study on the upstaging to invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC) after mastectomy for ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) [1]. They reported that 22.6% of 226 DCIS lesions were upgraded to IDC after mastectomy, and the prevalence of macrometastasis of sentinel lymph nodes (SLNs) was 0.9%. I would like to make two comments on this study. First, the authors believed SLN biopsy for patients undergoing mastectomy with a pre-operative diagnosis of DCIS was overtreatment based on the fact that the prevalence of SLN metastasis was low and the long-term outcome was excellent. However, although the reported 5-year recurrence-free survival was as high as 99.5%, I noticed the median follow-up period was only 31 months. The survival might be biased with a large ratio of censored data. Moreover, three out of five patients with SLN metastasis were post-operatively pathologically diagnosed as DCIS, indicating that the micro-invasive component were likely to be missed in the pathological test in this study, not only for original lesions, but also for SLNs. As a result, the

rate of upstaging and SLN metastasis could both be underestimated. Second, since the surgical procedures were decided by patients themselves, I wonder how many of the included lesions could alternatively be treated by breast-conserving surgery and how many were lesions with a wide range of micro-calcifications or suspected intraductal spreadings. It would be essential to know if there were any differences in rates of upstaging and/or SLN metastasis between these two types of patients.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest None of the authors has relevant conflicts of interest to declare.

Reference

1. Watanabe Y, Anan K, Saimura M, Koga K, Fujino M, Mine M, et al. Upstaging to invasive ductal carcinoma after mastectomy for ductal carcinoma in situ: predictive factors and role of sentinel lymph node biopsy. *Breast Cancer*. 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12282-018-0871-7>.

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✉ Qing Lv
lqlq1963@163.com

¹ Department of Breast Surgery, West China Hospital, Sichuan University, Guoxuexiang 37, Chengdu 610041, People's Republic of China