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Letters

Curative Radiotherapy for Lung Cancer in the UK: International Benchmarking

Madam — Lung cancer survival in the UK is lower than in other countries [1]. Proposed reasons include inferior treatment outcomes, more advanced disease or poorer patient access to treatment. The Royal College of Radiologists collected data on patients treated with curative-intent radiotherapy for non-small cell lung cancer over 2 months in 2013 [2]. We report on the overall survival of the cohort and compare it with international case series. In total, 317 patients were studied, with follow-up data available in 187 (59%). The median survival was 22 months, with a 2-year overall survival of 44% (95% confidence interval 36–53%). We compared the audit patients with European cohorts [3] whose survival was reported according to risk groups using gender, performance status, FEV1, tumour size and number of involved lymph nodes. A validated online tool calculated a patient's risk group (low, medium, high) according to these factors and an individualised 2-year overall survival [4]. A risk group could be assigned to 150 patients and a predicted 2-year overall survival determined for 135 patients. There was no convincing evidence of inferior treatment effects (Table 1). We previously noted [2,5] that access to curative radiotherapy is 8% and shows marked variability between networks. A lack of access to curative-intent radiotherapy may affect lung cancer overall survival. We would propose that access to curative-intent radiotherapy should be monitored in a national audit programme such as the National Lung Cancer Audit (NLCA).

Table 1
Overall survival of European and UK cohorts

European cohort	2-year overall survival (95% confidence interval)	UK cohort number	UK cohort 2-year overall survival (95% confidence interval)
Low risk	65% (52–78%)	68	56% (43–69%)
Medium risk	32% (24–40%)	62	36% (23–49%)
High risk	7% (1–14%)	20	5% (0–13%)
All with individualised 2-year overall survival estimate	42%	135	44% (34–51%)

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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