

Is age just a number? Geriatric assessment, nutritional outcomes and survival rates in older adults with head and neck cancer

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Introduction

Background

Older adults with cancer are more at risk of malnutrition which is associated with poor treatment tolerance, quality of life and reduced survival.

In Ireland, 60% of cancer patients are ≥ 65 yrs old¹. The Geriatric 8 (G8) screening tool identifies frailty in older adults with cancer².

Aim: to determine frailty risk, review nutritional outcomes and survival rate of older adults with HNC attending St Luke's Radiation Oncology Network.

Methods

- Retrospective review of patients (n=74) who received radical radiotherapy +/- chemotherapy in 2019.
- Patient categorised into ages (<65years Vs ≥ 65 years).
- Medical records reviewed for 5 year survival.
- GG8 screening tool was used to assess frailty.

Results and discussion

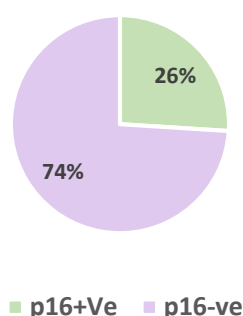
Patients ≥ 65 years n=31 (42% of overall cohort)

Average % weight loss during treatment: 7.5%

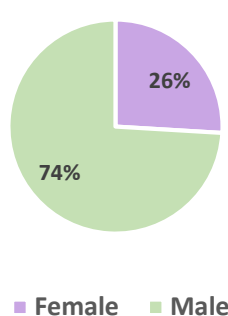
Average age: 72 years

Use of enteral feeding during treatment : 29%

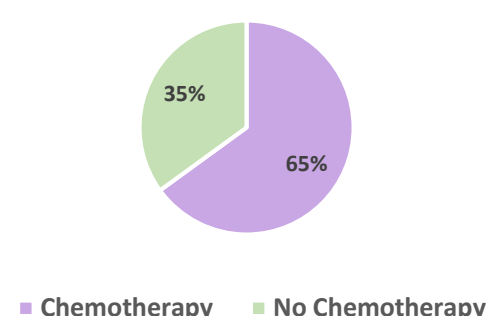
p16 status



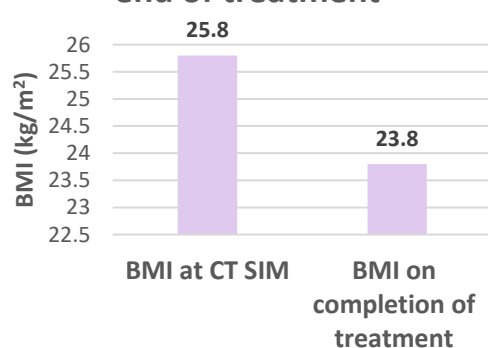
Gender



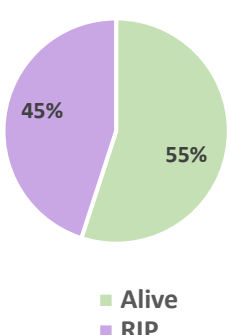
Chemotherapy



Average BMI at CT SIM Vs end of treatment



Survival rate



G8 screening tool

Items	Possible answers
Food intake in the last 3 months	0: severe reduction in food intake 1: moderate reduction in food intake 2: normal food intake
Weight loss during the last 3 months	0: weight loss >3kg 1: does not know 2: weight loss between 1 and 3 kg 3: no weight loss
Mobility	0: bed/chair bound 1: able to get out of bed/chair but does not go out 2: goes out
Neuropsychological problems	0: severe dementia or depression 1: mild dementia or depression 2: no psychological problems
Body Mass Index (BMI)	0: BMI <19 1: BMI 19 to <21 2: BMI 21 to <23 3: BMI 23 or greater
Takes more than 3 medications per day	0: yes 1: no
Self-rated health status (compared to other people of the same age)	0: not as good 0.5: does not know 1: as good 2: better
Age	0: >85 1: 80-85 2: <80
Total score (0-17) [Cut-off ≤ 14 indicating impairment]	

Older adults undergoing radical treatment for head and neck cancer are at high risk of frailty and significant weight loss. 68% of patient's ≥ 65 years scored ≤ 14 on the retrospective G8 screen. This indicates the need for comprehensive geriatric assessment and highlights the importance of early, intensive nutrition intervention.

Further research is recommended to assess long-term dietetic outcomes, and identify potential variables and correlations within the data.

G8 Score

