

Quality of life of patients with rectal cancer treated with chemoradiotherapy alone and showing clinical complete response: a comparative study with patients treated by chemoradiotherapy and TME

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INTRODUCTION

In 15-20% of the patients with rectal cancer, chemoradiotherapy (CRT) results in a complete response of the tumor and lymph nodes.

Patients with a clinical complete response after CRT are offered an alternative treatment than standard TME, the so called 'wait-and-see' protocol. These patients do not undergo surgery but are followed by a stringent follow-up schedule, including endoscopy and MRI.

Recent evidence reported promising oncological outcomes in these patients included in the 'wait-and-see'-protocol¹.

[1] Maas M, e.a. Wait-and-see policy for clinical complete responders after chemoradiation for rectal cancer. J Clin Oncol. 2011 Dec 10;29(35):4633-40

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study was to assess the quality of life (QoL) of wait-and-see patients and to compare the results with a matched controlled group of patients treated with CRT, followed by a total mesorectal excision

METHODS

Inclusion criteria:

- Treated between January 2009 and December 2011
- Three Dutch hospitals
- Treated for primary rectal cancer:
 - CRT + W&S
 - CRT + TME

Questionnaires:

- Quality of life (EORTC-QLQ-C30, and -CR38)
- General health (SF-36)
- Sexual function (IIEF, or FSFI)
- Bladder function (IPSS)
- Incontinence-scores (Vaizey, and LARS)

Statistical analysis:

Matched pairs: age, gender, cT-stage (TNM), tumor height

Paired-samples *t*-test

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of both patient groups.

There was no significant differences in sexual outcome, between CRT+W&S and CRT+TME.

The (sub)scores that did show a significant difference are presented in table 2.

Table 1: Patient characteristics

	CRT + W&S		CRT + TME	
n	27		27	
age (mean)	66,7 (± 10,8)		63,3 (± 11,7)	
gender	Male 17 (63%) Female 10 (37%)		Male 17 (63%) Female 10 (37%)	
T-stage TNM	T2 6 (22,2%) T3 19 (70,4%) T4 1 (3,7%) ? 1 (3,7%)		T2 6 (22,2%) T3 18 (66,7%) T4 3 (11,1%) ? 0	
tumor height	≤ 6cm 21 (77,8%) > 6cm 4 (14,8%) ? 2 (7,4%)		≤ 6cm 20 (74,1%) > 6cm 5 (18,5%) ? 2 (7,4%)	

Table 2: Paired-samples *t*-test, significant differences

Questionnaire	CRT + W&S (mean)	CRT + surgery (mean)	Sig. (2-tailed)
EORTC-QLQ-C30, constipation	1,04	1,44	0,013
EORTC-QLQ-C30, financial problems	1,04	1,59	0,001
EORTC-QLQ-CR38, body image	3,89	5,93	0,002
EORTC-QLQ-C30, QoL	5,74	0,59	<0,001
SF-36, general health	13,37	14,89	0,025
Vaizey	3,24	7,24	0,028
IPSS, intermittency	0,35	1,06	0,035
IPSS QoL	0,59	1,29	0,018

Blue numbers indicate favorable outcome in questionnaires

CONCLUSION

W&S-patients have a significant better outcome in several domains of QoL-questionnaires, compared with rectal cancer patients treated by CRT + TME.