PATTERNS OF BREAST CANCER RELAPSE AT UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA MEDICAL CENTRE

Rozita AM¹, Marniza S¹, Mastura MY¹, Wan Zamaniah W¹, Yip CH², Taib NA²
1 Clinical Oncology Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2 Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ABSTRACT:

Despite being the major cause of cancer-related death in Malaysian women, local data on patterns of breast cancer relapse and their long term outcomes are still scarce. We conducted a retrospective study on all patients treated for non-metastatic invasive breast cancer in 1999-2000 at the University of Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC), who subsequently developed relapse. We sought to analyse the patterns of relapse, their associated clinicopathological features and the overall survival rate following the relapses. Univariate and multivariate analyses were used to analyse demographics and clinicopathological factors. Survival was analysed using the Kaplan and Meier method and compared by the log rank test. A total of 268 patients with a mean age of 50, were identified for the study. At a median follow-up of 50 months, 73 patients (27.2%) had relapsed. Local, regional and distant relapse rates were 5.5%, 1.9% and 19.8% respectively, whereas, the 5-year survival rates were 61%, 40% and 21% respectively (p < 0.01). Most relapses occurred within the first five years of diagnosis. Patients with long disease-free interval had better survival. The most common distant relapse site was the lungs while bone was the distant relapse site with the best prognosis. Disease stage, nodal status and oestrogen receptor status were found to have correlation with the risk of relapse. We concluded that the survival of patients with relapsed breast cancer was associated with the site(s) of first relapse and the disease free interval and clinicopathological factors can be used to predict the risk of relapse. (JUMMEC 2010; 13 (1): 24-32)

KEYWORDS: relapsed breast cancer, relapse site, survival

Introduction

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Malaysia. The third issue of the National Cancer Registry on cancer incidence in Peninsular Malaysia reported 11,952 new cases of breast cancer in 2003-2005, accounting for 31.3% of newly diagnosed cancers in women. Breast cancer was also the most common cancer in all ethnic and age groups of females above 15. The peak age-specific incidence rate was in the 50-60 years age-group (1).

Breast cancer is also the most frequent cancer in women worldwide. It accounts for 23% of all cancers. With an estimated number of 1.15 million new cases in 2002, it ranked second overall when both sexes were considered together (2). Despite the increasing trend in the incidence of breast cancer worldwide, survival has steadily improved over the recent decades. This may be explained by the development of improved treatment modalities and earlier detection as a result of effective screening programs and increased awareness among women. Nevertheless, breast cancer remains as the leading cause of death in women worldwide (3).

The aim of treating of non-metastatic invasive breast cancer is to cure. Management of breast cancer in UMMC was evidence-based and later guided by the

Correspondence:
Rozita Abdul Malik
Clinical Oncology Unit
Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: rozita_abdulmalik@yahoo.com