

FOLLICULAR LYMPHOMA AND CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HISTOLOGIC TRANSFORMATION

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Histologic transformation of follicular lymphoma is possible during the natural course of the tumor. HT rates vary in published series between 10 to 60%, probably due to methodological differences between reports; disparities within study populations, inconsistent HT definitions and varying diagnostic methods.

The purpose of this study is to register the frequency of HT in the more aggressive lymphomas in the large series of patients with follicular lymphomas treated by the Spanish Lymphoma Oncology Group (GOTEL).

METHODS

Clinical characteristics of a large number of patients obtained prospectively were analyzed to identify significant prognostic and therapeutic features.

Data such as age, sex, stage of the disease (Ann Arbor), histologic grade, B symptoms, number of affected lymphatic chains, number of extralymphatic sites affected, bone marrow infiltration, performance status, presence of bulky disease, detection of hepatitis C virus as well as lactate dehydrogenase, b2 microglobulin, albumin and standard blood tests were obtained upon diagnosis. International prognostic index for follicular lymphoma (FLIPI) were also recorded. Comparisons were established using a Chi-square.

RESULTS

The study population included 1076 patients with a diagnosis of follicular lymphoma and a median follow-up of 54 months. The incidence of histologic transformations in our series was 3%, seen mainly in patients with diffuse large-cell B lymphoma. Median follow up was 54 months (range 0,1-678) in the general series and 58 (range 2-418) in the histologic transformations cohort ($p=0.37$). Multiple clinical characteristics were analyzed to determine their histologic transformations prediction value but were not significant. In terms of treatment modality, neither receiving anthracyclines nor observation influenced subsequent transformation. Twenty-three percent of the general population has died during follow up whereas patients in the histologic transformations group have had a mortality rate of 49% ($p=0.002$).

CONCLUSIONS

In our series, the incidence of histologic transformation is 3%. In our experience clinical factors or the type of treatment do not influence later histological transformation.

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