Skin cancer care at the end of life

Optimising quality of life

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Common clinical scenario

Patient A

Patient B
Life expectancy is more than age

Patient A

Patient B
Medical decisions at the end of life are challenging

- Prostate cancer screening
- Surgery in the last year of life (>30%)
- Routine screening in patients with metastatic cancer (8-15% mammography, PSA screening in patients with advanced lung or pancreatic cancer)

Decisions at the end of life

How much will it help?
Decisions for Older Adults

How much will it help?

When will it help?
Decisions for Older Adults

How much will it help?

When will it help?

**Time lag to benefit:**
- Statin therapy: 0.5 years
- Colorectal cancer screening: 10.7 years
- Mohs for an asymptomatic BCC: ?
Our question:

How are we treating patients with BCC who have limited life expectancy, and may not live long enough to benefit from treatment?

(in the United States)
Prospective Cohort Study of 1536 patients (1993 tumors) with BCC and SCC

Age: mean 68 years
Gender: 75% male
Prior skin cancer: 58%
Treatment site: 48% SF VA

Limited Life expectancy
Patients older than 85 years
Multiple comorbidities (Charlson score ≥ 3)
Patients who died within 2 years of treatment
BCC and SCC treatment by life expectancy

Overall

No treatment

Other

Destruction

Excision

Mohs
Patient reported problems after skin surgery

- 27% (236 of 866 patients) reported a problem
  - 38% were moderately, very or extremely severe
  - 52% were medical complications

- 14% (123 of 866 patients) reported a medical complication
Summary

• Most BCCs and SCCs are treated with surgery in the US
• Treatment choices are not affected by life expectancy even when adjusting for patient and tumor characteristics, and regardless of how life expectancy is defined
• Over a quarter of patients report a problem after skin surgery
Conclusion

It is unclear if every patient will live long enough to benefit from surgery.

Patients in the US, including those at the end of life, are currently not given choices on treatment of BCC.
88 year-old patient with an asymptomatic 5mm pearly papule with telangectasias on back

What is the patient’s life expectancy?
eprognosis.ucsf.edu
88 year-old patient with an asymptomatic 5mm pearly papule with telangectasias on back

What is the patient’s life expectancy?

[eprognosis.ucsf.edu](eprognosis.ucsf.edu)

More than 1 year

Less than 1 year
What is the patient’s life expectancy?

eprognosis.ucsf.edu

More than 1 year

Discuss likely diagnosis, prognosis, advise biopsy and treatment

Less than 1 year

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Less than 1 year

High risk tumor?

Low risk tumor?

Discuss risks benefits of all management options including active surveillance
Active Surveillance

for asymptomatic BCC at the end of life

Photograph
Measure
Follow up patient in 3 months
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