No overall survival difference with gemcitabine-based compared with fluorouracil-based chemotherapy in advanced cholangiocarcinoma

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The Thai Cancer, 2018, 31.61.009

Background: Cisplatin-gemcitabine is the standard chemotherapy for advanced/unresectable cholangiocarcinoma (CCA). However, there is no head-to-head trial between gemcitabine (GEM) and fluorouracil (FU)-based regimen in this setting. This study aimed to compare the difference in overall survival among patients with advanced CCA with GEM versus FU-based chemotherapy.

Method: Data of patients with advanced CCA who were treated with either GEM or FU-based regimen between 2009-2015 at Srinagarind Hospital, Khon Kaen University were retrospectively reviewed. Data were collected regarding patient, disease, and treatment variables. Outcomes included overall survival, response rate, and toxicity profile.

Results: Out of 224 patients, 143 patients (63.8%) received FU-based chemotherapy and 81 (36.2%) received GEM-based regimen. Overall survival was not significantly different between the FU arm vs the GEM arm (9.6 vs 9.0 months, p=0.20). In patients with measurable disease at baseline, the overall response rate was 24.4% vs 26.2% (FU vs GEM; p=0.32); disease control rate was 24.4% vs 30.9% (p=0.50). In the FU vs GEM arms, neutropenia occurred in 6.3% vs 38.3%, thrombocytopenia 0% vs 3.7%, and elevated ALT/AST 3.5% vs 2.5%.

Conclusions: The overall survival and response rate for advanced CCA patients receiving GEM-based and FU-based chemotherapy were comparable. GEM-based regimen resulted in more neutropenia and thrombocytopenia.