

THE EFFECTS OF HOMEOPATHICS FORMULAS TREATMENT ON ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED PANCREATIC CANCER

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Selective aspects of the quality of life of patients with advanced pancreatic cancer were studied with 87 patients enrolled in this trial. A questionnaire was devised to measure selective aspects of quality of life. A survival curve was analyzed; and group follow-up was for twelve months.

An important beneficial action was noted on pain and appetite, as well as on nausea and vomiting. Results indicated that patients with advanced pancreatic cancer during treatment with homeopathic formulas revealed a significant improvement on selective aspects of the quality of life.

INTRODUCTION

Exocrinous pancreatic cancer has the most serious prognosis among all cancers of the gastrointestinal tract. It is the seventh most common tumor in the United States and the fourth cause of death for cancer patients. The quiet and rapid dissemination of the tumor of the pancreas reduces the cure rate of all patients to only 1%.

The major and severe difficulties of treatment of pancreatic cancer are: firstly, when diagnosed, it has generally invaded the region to approximately 85% and/or involved hepatic MTTs; secondly, patients are very weak and anorexia, pain and weight loss. They show jaundice or hepatic dysfunction and, for that reason, the pharmacological action of drugs eliminated via bile are modified.

Though with some differences, the overall survival of pancreatic cancer patients is from three to six months (Moertel, Cubillas, Fitzgerald). A significant change in the overall survival of such patients has not been observed during the past few years in spite of treatments with new cytostatic drugs and megavoltage x-ray therapy. Any palliative treatment must be evaluated for its effect on the patient's quality of life.

In our prospective essay, a research on selective aspects of the quality of life was included. Our hypothesis was that any positive clinical effects observed would be reflected in the subjective experience of the patient.

Our idea was that patients receiving homeopathic formulas treatment independent of treatment with cytostatic drugs and/or x-ray therapy would have a significantly smaller amount of damage to their quality of life. This group is not expected to have problems with toxicity.

PATIENTS AND METHODS: TREATMENT WITH HOMEOPATHIC FORMULAS

Compounds formed by various vegetable and mineral substances which constitute the base of the homeopathic formulas treatment were used. Mother tinctures in different alcoholic concentrations were obtained from plants. Minerals were triturated in polysaccharides through homeopathic processes to their third decimal dynamization in mills to spheres of porcelain. After the third dynamization, liquid dynamizations followed until reaching the desired dilution of alcoholic solutions in tri-distilled water. Starting from mother tinctures, we used the same process both in plants and in minerals after their fourth dynamization (i.e., after the transition from solid to liquid), employing the same solvents. Daily doses of 4 cc were administered intramuscularly during the entire treatment. Sublinguals and oral dose were also added for an additional 2.5 cc distributed in four daily doses.

QUALITY OF LIFE EVALUATION

Evaluation of some aspects of the quality of life were made at one-month intervals using a questionnaire specifically proposed for this trial (Table 2).

TABLE 2	
Fields of Action and Contents of Items of Questionnaire on the Quality of Life	
1.	Ponderal Weight: Did patient lose weight? Did the patient's weight remain stable? Did the patient gain weight?
2.	Gastrointestinal Toxicity: Did the patient have nausea? Did the patient vomit? Did the patient lose his appetite?
3.	Abdominal Pain: Severe? Moderate? Mild? No pain?
4.	Physical Activity: Was mobility deteriorated? Did the patient manage household and other activities?
5.	Emotional State: Improvement? Stability? Depression?

The first questionnaire was completed by the patient or a close relative with a doctor's assistance. It was repeated monthly.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 items grouped into five categories: Ponderal Weight, Gastrointestinal Toxicity, Abdominal Pain, Physical Activity with Emotional State. The patients marked each item, monthly, in an ordinary scale, to which a score had been previously assigned.

RESULTS

Eighty-seven patients were eligible. From the 87 patients studied during this period, 60 of them are still alive and continue with the homeopathic formulas treatment. Twenty-seven patients died during treatment.

Concerning Pain: It was observed that 30% of the patients underwent treatment with no pain; 48% with mild pain; 14% reported moderate pain and the remaining 9% had severe pain.

Appetite: Appetite remained stable in 57% of the cases, increased in 7% and decreased in 35% of the patients.

Ponderal Weight: In this category no significant favorable action of homeopathic formulas treatment was observed. Fifty-four percent of the patients continued to lose weight; 34% maintained their weight, and only 11% increased it.

Nausea and Vomiting: An important result was observed in this category. Fifty-six percent of the patients showed no episodes of nausea and vomiting during treatment; 36% showed a noticeable reduction of symptoms and in only 7% was it possible to note an increase.

Physical Function: Assessment observed that, especially in mobility and the ambulatory function, as well as personal and family relationships, 62% of the patients showed a normal level of activity versus 38% that showed decreased activity.

Emotional State: The emotional State was also investigated, with 8% showing improvement, 65% indicating a stable emotional state and only 26% suffering from depression.

DISCUSSION

Our clinical evaluation indicates that the homeopathic formulas treatment significantly reduced morbidity associated with advanced pancreatic cancer.

The study was done to determine in which way the homeopathic formulas of the Immunological System has impact on the selective aspects of the quality of life. Results show a significant increase in the survival of patients treated with homeopathic formulas with respect to the figures obtained in national as well as international studies.

A significant action in pain relief was observed since 73% of the patients had no pain or only mild pain. Patients' appetites remained stable in the majority of cases. On the other hand, it was observed that 54% of the patients continued to lose weight during treatment.

The action of homeopathic formulas in controlling nausea and vomiting was also significantly important. When the physical and social functions as well as emotional states were assessed, emotional improvement or stability was observed, along with a physical and social activity compatible with what is considered normal, in 65% of the patients.

Due to the palliative characteristics of the homeopathic formulas treatment, great importance was given to the potential toxic effects. Physicians reported no secondary effects were noted by patients.

The questionnaire used for this study proved to be a convenient, valid and reliable measure for quality of life. It must be pointed out that the study was conducted with strict administrative management of collected data, the use of an extremely simple questionnaire completed at regular intervals and possibly most important, a high level of motivation manifested by the patients.

We conclude, completely in agreement with Dr. Lesley J. Fallowfield, of the London Hospital Medical College: "In the future, the medical oncologist should observe, measuring scientifically the quality of life as an essential element in the evaluation of therapies."

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