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Merkel Cell Carcinoma: Clinical Outcome and Prognostic Factors in 351 Patients

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BACKGROUND: Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a rare and aggressive neuroendocrine carcinoma of the skin. We aimed to describe clinical outcome and prognostic factors of MCC patients in 2 expert-centers.

METHODS: Patients with histologically confirmed MCC in 1990-2014 were included. Data on patient, tumour characteristics and treatment were retrospectively collected.

RESULTS: 351 Patients were evaluated, 153 (44%) males, with a median age of 74 years (range 28-94). Median follow-up time was 28 months (IQR 13-58). Median primary tumour size was 17mm (range 2-135). At time of diagnosis 112 (32%) patients had lymphnode metastases. The cohorts' 5-year estimated OS was 58%. Using a competing risk analysis the 5-year estimated relapse and DSD was 42% and 22%, respectively. Patients with postoperative RTx experienced less recurrence (SDH 0.6; CI 0.3-0.7). While nodal involvement and the male gender were predictors of a higher DSD (SDH 2.8; CI 1.2-6.6, SDH 2.9; CI 1.1-7.6, respectively)

CONCLUSION: In this large cohort a low DSD, compared to a low OS was seen. This indicates that a significant number of elderly MCC patients die due to other causes than MCC. Postoperative RTx reduced relapse in MCC patients. Male gender and nodal metastasis were independent prognostic factors for a worse DSD.