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Oncological outcomes of soft tissue sarcomas in the distal extremities

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Background

Management of soft tissue sarcomas in the distal extremities can be challenging with patients presenting late and a high proportion of lesions inadvertently excised. Few studies have assessed the outcomes of sarcomas in this location. This study looks at the oncological outcomes of patients with soft-tissue sarcomas in the distal extremities managed at a regional tumour centre in the United Kingdom.

Methods

The centre database was used to identify all patients with distal extremity soft tissue sarcomas between 1985 and 2012. Patient, tumour, treatment and outcome data was collected from the database and medical records.

Results

800 patients were included in this study. Of 2667 soft tissue sarcomas seen at the unit, 244 (9%) were located below the elbow while 556 (21%) patients had sarcomas below the knee. There were 432 males and 368 females with a mean age of 49.9 years (2 to 92). The three most common diagnoses were synovial sarcoma (18%), myxofibrosarcoma (8%) and clear cell sarcoma (4%). 38% of the sarcomas were superficial while 40% of them had inadvertent excision carried out elsewhere and presented late. Local excision was carried out in 496 patients (74.7%) and amputation in 156 (23.5%).

The overall risk of local recurrence was 13.7% in this series with risk increased by an involved margin, type of tumour or an inadvertent biopsy. The overall survival rate at five years was 58% and was related to the grade, size, type and depth of the tumour and patient age.

Conclusion

This large series has shown that the oncological outcomes of soft tissue sarcomas of the distal extremities are similar to other sites. It highlights that a clear margin of excision is essential to achieve local control and that inadvertent excision can increase the risk of local recurrence.

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