http://www.ejcem.ur.edu.pl/en/ European Journal of Clinical and Experimental Medicine Eur J Clin Exp Med 2020; 18 (1): 38–41

#### **REVIEW PAPER**

Piotr Przyczyna (1) 1,2(ABDFG), David Aebisher (1) 3(ABDFG), Dorota Bartusik-Aebisher (1) 4(ABDFG), Ewa Kaznowska (1) 1,2(ABDFG)

# Treating kidney cancer – a review

<sup>1</sup> Clinical Department of Pathomorphology, Clinical Hospital No. 1, Rzeszów, Poland <sup>2</sup> Department of Pathomorphology, Medical College of Rzeszów University, Rzeszów, Poland <sup>3</sup> Department of Photomedicine and Physical Chemistry, Medical College of Rzeszów University, Rzeszów, Poland <sup>4</sup> Department of Biochemistry and General Chemistry, Medical College of Rzeszów University, Rzeszów, Poland

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction.** Kidney cancer in the structure of registered cases was in 6th place in men and 8th in women. **Aim.** Understanding the molecular biology of renal cell carcinoma has made it possible to produce new diagnostic methods.

**Material and methods.** This review was performed according to a systematic literature search.

**Results.** Minimally invasive techniques seem to have a bright future in kidney cancer. However, they still require many clinical trials before they enter the general clinical use.

**Conclusion.** Photodynamic therapy, thanks to research conducted in kidney cancer, will find application in cancer of other organs.

Keywords. kidney cancer, malignant tumors, MRI

#### Introduction

The number of malignant tumors in Poland over the last three decades has more than doubled, reaching more than 140.5 thousand cases in 2010, affecting about 70,000 men and 70.5 thousand women. The incidence of malignant tumors in Poland in 2015, in absolute numbers, was 81,659 for men and 81,661 for women. These numbers, in Podkarpacie, were respectively 4,665 and 4,276. The mortality rate for malignant neoplasms in Poland in 2015 totaled in absolute numbers 55,663 men and 44,938 women, and 28,586 in the Podkarpacie region alone for men and 1,904 for women. Kidney can-

cer in the structure of registered cases was in 6th place in men (3.9%) and 8th in women (2.4%). In Podkarpacie, kidney cancer took one place higher - 5th place in men (5.1%) overtaking stomach cancer, and 7th place in women (3.1%) overtaking cervical cancer.<sup>2</sup> Although the incidence of kidney cancer in men was lower than the average for EU countries, in 2010 the mortality rate was about 25% higher than the average for EU countries (data from 2009).<sup>3</sup> In 2013/14, the percentage of deaths from cancer was about 30 percent. lower than the average for Poland, however, malignant kidney tumors are still a serious epidemiological problem.<sup>4</sup> Almost 90%

Corresponding author: David Aebisher, e-mail: daebisher@ur.edu.pl

Participation of co-authors: A – Author of the concept and objectives of paper; B – collection of data; C – implementation of research; D – elaborate, analysis and interpretation of data; E – statistical analysis; F – preparation of a manuscript; G – working out the literature; H – obtaining funds

Received: 24.10.2019 | Accepted: 8.01.2020

Publication date: March 2020

Przyczyna P, Aebisher D, Bartusik-Aebisher D, Kaznowska E. *Treating kidney cancer – a review.* Eur J Clin Exp Med. 2020;18(1):38–41. doi: 10.15584/ejcem.2020.1.8

of malignant kidney tumors are renal cell carcinomas (RCC), while 80% of renal cell carcinomas are clear cell carcinomas (RCCC). 5-6 The most important prognostic factors in 5-year survival are the clinical stage, grade, local stage of the tumor, the status of local lymph nodes and the presence of distant metastases. 7-16

#### Material and methods

This article is based on an analysis of articles posted on the PubMed website (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ pubmed), books and websites.

#### Results

# Minimally invasive techniques

Percutaneous ablation and cryotherapy were originally intended only for patients with one kidney, patients with multiple tumors, elderly patients, and for those patients who did not qualify for surgery. However, the percentage of these procedures has recently increased in patients with small tumors, most frequently detected incidentally.<sup>17</sup> Eight percent of patients in the US are treated with minimally invasive methods, compared to 1998, when only 4% were treated using these methods.<sup>18</sup> This is possible thanks to the positive opinions of preliminary reports on the control of the cancer process.<sup>19-23</sup>

#### **Operational techniques**

# Surgical treatment should be divided into two categories:

a) saving operations. The goal of sparing treatment should be optimal regional tumor control, combined with minimizing ischemia, ideally under 30 minutes.<sup>24</sup> Patients with T1a and T1b tumors (i.e. tumors that do not exceed 7 cm in the largest dimension) and the normal function of the other kidney have comparable results to those operated with the radical nephrectomy technique.<sup>25-27</sup> Nevertheless, some patients cannot be operated on with saving techniques due to the unfavorable location of the tumor or local advancement. In the hands of an experienced surgeon, the results obtained using the laparoscopic, laparotomy and robotic methods are comparable.

b) radical nephrectomy. During this operation the kidney, perirenal fat tissue, regional lymph nodes and adrenal glands are removed. <sup>28</sup> This is the preferred technique for tumors growing in the inferior vena cava. However, it leads to an increased risk of chronic kidney disease and increased mortality associated with the cardiovascular system. <sup>29-31</sup>

Sparing therapy is more likely to preserve kidney function, reduce the number of cardiovascular events and reduce mortality therefore, radical treatment should not be used when a saver treatment is possible.<sup>32-33</sup> Studies show that there are no significant differences in the group of lymphadenectomy patients and in the group

of patients who did not remove lymph nodes.<sup>34</sup> Lymph nodes are pre-operatively assessed in computed tomography and/or in magnetic resonance imaging as well as intraoperative palpation. Some authors report that CT/MRI may not show the presence of small metastases to regional lymph nodes.<sup>35</sup> Adrenalectomy should only be performed if the adrenal glands appear suspicious in preoperative imaging or when the tumor is located in the upper pole of the kidney near the adrenal glands.<sup>36-37</sup> Metastasomy is performed in patients with diagnosed synchronous metastases or in patients with metachronic metastases in the general good state, which metastases responded to therapy and are removable. This treatment should be considered because complete removal of metastases improves the prognosis.<sup>38</sup>

#### Systemic treatment

#### a) chemotherapy

Most kidney cancers develop from proximal tubules. These coils have a high level of expression of the P-gly-coproteins responsible for drug resistance. For this reason, chemotherapy is not routinely used. The only exception is the combination of 5-fluorouracil with immunotherapy, but these data need confirmation.<sup>39</sup>

#### b) immunotherapy

IFN-alpha in randomized studies has demonstrated survival compared to patients with metastatic renal cancer receiving hormone therapy.<sup>40</sup> The combination of biological drugs is of interest to several randomized trials. For now, there is no evidence that combining drugs gives better results than monotherapy.<sup>41</sup>

# c) angiogenesis inhibitors

Understanding the molecular biology of renal cell carcinoma has made it possible to produce new drugs. These include two recently-registered drugs in the US and Europe - these drugs target the vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and platelet derived growth factor (PDGF) genes.<sup>42</sup>

Sorafenib is an inhibitor of many kinases that have activity against, inter alia, Raf-1, VEGFR-2, PDGFR. Three months of taking the drug increases the percentage of patients with progression free from 43% to 75% compared to placebo.<sup>43</sup> Sunitinib is an oxindole tyrosine kinase inhibitor (oxindol tyrosine kinase (TK) inhibitor). The median of progression-free survival in patients using sunitinib (11 months) is longer than in those using TNF-alpha (5 months).<sup>44</sup>

#### Photodynamic therapy

Currently, photodynamic therapy in renal cancer is only used in preclinical studies.<sup>45</sup> The first study in mice 46 reported tumor necrosis to a depth of 3-5mm without any side effects. In 2008, the first studies with photo-

dynamic therapy in in vitro kidney cancer appeared. It turned out that the uptake of marker (hypericin) and apoptosis occurs in almost 100% of cancer cells. 46,47 An additional discovery was the increase in radiosensitivity. In clinical practice, photodynamic therapy is used to assess surgical margins during sparing procedures. 48

#### Conclusion

In the last century, the treatment of choice in kidney cancer was nephrectomy. The more the procedure was performed with a wider margin, the better. Currently, thanks to a better understanding of molecular biology and the conduction of numerous studies, we come to the conclusion that saving treatments should not be just an alternative. Radical nephrectomy should be another option, not the first. Particular mention should be made of photodynamic therapy. It seems to be a safe and at the same time extremely effective and easy to carry out therapy. It is to be hoped that patients with renal insufficiency and other complications of nephrectomy will soon be only a fraction of a percent of patients with kidney cancer. Photodynamic therapy, thanks to research conducted in kidney cancer, will find application in cancer of other organs.

### **Acknowledgments**

Dorota Bartusik-Aebisher acknowledges support from the National Center of Science NCN (New drug delivery systems-MRI study, Grant OPUS-13 number 2017/25/B/ST4/02481).

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