



Research Article
Volume 26 Issue 4 - April 2024
DOI: 10.19080/CTOIJ.2024.25.556193

Cancer Ther Oncol Int J

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Evaluation of Multimodality Imaging Based Treatment Volume Determination for Vulvar Squamous Cell Carcinoma (VSCC)



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Submission: March 19, 2024; Published: April 22, 2024

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Abstract

Objective: Although accounting for a relatively smaller proportion of all cancers worldwide, vulvar squamous cell carcinoma (VSCC) presents a health concern among women. While surgery may play a critical role for successful management of VSCC, irradiation may serve as a complementary or alternative therapeutic strategy in certain circumstances. In this study, we aimed at evaluating treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative assessment of CT and MRI.

Materials and methods: Ultimate endpoint of this study has been about treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative assessment of CT and MRI. All included patients have been referred for RT at Department of Radiation Oncology at Gulhane Medical Faculty, University of Health Sciences for VSCC. We carried out a comparative analysis of treatment volume determination by CT simulation images for radiation treatment planning and with Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

Results: As the critical result of this study, we found that CT and MRI defined treatment volume determination resulted in differences. Within this context, fusion of CT and MRI was used for ground truth treatment volume definition.

Conclusion: In the current study, we found that CT and MRI defined treatment volume determination resulted in differences. Taking this into account, fusion of CT and MRI was utilized for ground truth treatment volume definition. These results may have implications for increased adoption of multimodality imaging for treatment volume determination of VSCC, however, validation in prospective clinical studies may be required.

Keywords: Vulvar squamous cell carcinoma /VSCC); Radiation therapy (RT); Target definition, Computed Tomography (CT); Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

Abbreviations: RT: Radiation Therapy; CT: Computed Tomography; MRI: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; VSCC: Vulvar Squamous Cell Carcinoma; EBRT: External Beam Radiation Therapy; SBRT: Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy; IMRT: Intensity Modulated RT; ART: Adaptive RT (ART; LINAC: Linear Accelerator; AAPM: American Association of Physicists in Medicine; ICRU: International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements

Introduction

Although accounting for a relatively smaller proportion of all cancers worldwide, vulvar squamous cell carcinoma (VSCC) presents a health concern among women [1-7]. Disease course typically depends on stage at diagnosis, and both the disease and treatment strategies utilized for management may deteriorate patients' quality of life. Surgical interventions, radiation therapy (RT), and systemic agents may be used for VSCC management

[2-7]. In terms of irradiation, several forms including external beam radiation therapy (EBRT), Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT), and brachytherapy may be used according to patient, disease, and treatment characteristics. As a matter of fact, utilization of higher irradiation doses may contribute to improved local control outcomes for VSCC, however, toxicity profile of radiation delivery should be considered to avoid excessive radiation induced toxicity. Clearly, recent years have

witnessed several advances in technology in the millenium era. Molecular imaging methods, Image Guided RT (IGRT), automatic segmentation techniques, Intensity Modulated RT (IMRT), stereotactic RT, and adaptive RT (ART) have been introduced for optimal radiotherapeutic management of patients [8-49]. Indeed, improved treatment results may solely be achieved through close collaboration among related disciplines for cancer management. Tumor boards may obviously contribute to bringing together surgical oncologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, imaging and other relevant specialists to discuss about patient, tumor, and treatment characteristics. While surgery may play a critical role for successful management of VSCC, irradiation may serve as a complementary or alternative therapeutic strategy in certain circumstances. In this study, we aimed at evaluating treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative assessment of CT and MRI.

Materials and Methods

Our clinic has long been treating a high patient population from several places from Turkey and abroad. Using state of the art irradiation techniques, several benign and malignant tumors were irradiated at our tertiary cancer center. The primary endpoint of this study has been about treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative assessment of CT and MRI. All included patients have been referred for RT at Department of Radiation Oncology at Gulhane Medical Faculty, University of Health Sciences for VSCC. We carried out a comparative analysis of treatment volume determination by CT simulation images for radiation treatment planning and with Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). CT simulations of the patients have been executed at CT-simulator (GE Lightspeed RT, GE Healthcare, Chalfont St. Giles, UK) available at our department. Also, MRI of patients have been acquired and used for comparative analysis. A Linear Accelerator (LINAC) with the capability of sophisticated IGRT techniques was utilized for irradiation. After rigid patient immobilization, planning CT images were acquired at CT-simulator for radiation treatment planning. Thereafter, acquired RT planning images were sent to the delineation workstation by use of the network. Treatment volumes and surrounding critical structures were defined on these images and structure sets were generated. Also, target definition was also performed on MRI for comparison. All patients were treated by using state of the art RT techniques at the Department of Radiation Oncology at Gulhane Medical Faculty, University of Health Sciences.

Results

Our study was primarily designed for assessment of treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative evaluation of CT and MRI. Irradiation procedures were performed at our Radiation Oncology Department of Gulhane Medical Faculty at University of Health Sciences, Ankara. Before treatment, all included patients were individually assessed by a multidisciplinary team of experts from surgical oncology, radiation oncology, and medical oncology.

We have considered the reports by American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) and International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements (ICRU) for accurate radiation treatment planning. Radiation physicists took part in generation of radiation treatment plans by considering the relevant critical organ dose constraints by meticulous consideration of contemporary guidelines and clinical experience. Also, the published international guidelines and consensus recommendations for RT contouring and treatment of vulvar carcinoma were considered [7]. Tissue heterogeneity, electron density, CT number and HU values in CT images were also considered by radiation physicists for accurate radiation treatment planning. Primary objective of radiation treatment planning was to achieve optimal treatment volume coverage without violation of critical organ dose constraints. IGRT techniques including kilovoltage cone beam CT and electronic digital portal imaging were utilized, and radiation treatment has been performed by Synergy (Elekta, UK) LINAC. As the critical result of this study, we found that CT and MRI defined treatment volume determination resulted in differences. Within this context, fusion of CT and MRI was used for ground truth treatment volume definition.

Discussion

While accounting for a relatively smaller proportion of all cancers worldwide, VSCC presents a health concern among women [1-7]. Disease course typically depends on stage at diagnosis, and both the disease and treatment strategies utilized for management may deteriorate patients' quality of life. Surgical interventions, RT, and systemic agents may be used for VSCC management [2-7]. In terms of irradiation, several forms including EBRT, SBRT, and brachytherapy may be used according to patient, disease, and treatment characteristics. As a matter of fact, utilization of higher irradiation doses may contribute to improved local control outcomes for VSCC, however, toxicity profile of radiation delivery should be taken into account to avoid excessive radiation induced toxicity. Clearly, recent years have witnessed several advances in technology in the millenium era. Molecular imaging methods, IGRT, automatic segmentation techniques, IMRT, stereotactic RT, and ART have been introduced for optimal radiotherapeutic management of patients [8-49]. Indeed, improved treatment results may solely be achieved through close collaboration among related disciplines for cancer management. Tumor boards may obviously contribute to bringing together surgical oncologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, imaging and other relevant specialists to discuss about patient, tumor, and treatment characteristics. While surgery may play a critical role for successful management of VSCC, irradiation may serve as a complementary or alternative therapeutic strategy in certain circumstances. In this study, we aimed at evaluating treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative assessment of CT and MRI.

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A LINAC with the capability of sophisticated IGRT techniques was utilized for irradiation. After rigid patient immobilization, planning CT images were acquired at CT-simulator for radiation treatment planning. Thereafter, acquired RT planning images were sent to the delineation workstation by use of the network. Treatment volumes and surrounding critical structures were defined on these images and structure sets were generated. Also, target definition was also performed on MRI for comparison. All patients were treated by using state of the art RT techniques at the Department of Radiation Oncology at Gulhane Medical Faculty, University of Health Sciences.

Our study was primarily designed for assessment of treatment volume determination for VSCC with comparative evaluation of CT and MRI. Irradiation procedures were performed at our Radiation Oncology Department of Gulhane Medical Faculty at University of Health Sciences, Ankara. Before treatment, all included patients were individually assessed by a multidisciplinary team of experts from surgical oncology, radiation oncology, and medical oncology. We have taken into account the reports by AAPM and ICRU for accurate radiation treatment planning. Radiation physicists took part in generation of radiation treatment plans by considering the relevant critical organ dose constraints by meticulous consideration of contemporary guidelines and clinical experience. Also, the published international guidelines and consensus recommendations for RT contouring and treatment of vulvar carcinoma were considered [7]. Tissue heterogeneity, electron density, CT number and HU values in CT images were also $considered\,by\,radiation\,physic ists\,for\,accurate\,radiation\,treatment$ planning. Primary objective of radiation treatment planning was to achieve optimal treatment volume coverage without violation of critical organ dose constraints. IGRT techniques including kilovoltage cone beam CT and electronic digital portal imaging were utilized, and radiation treatment has been performed by Synergy (Elekta, UK) LINAC. As the critical result of this study, we found that CT and MRI defined treatment volume determination resulted in differences. Within this context, fusion of CT and MRI was used for ground truth treatment volume definition.

From the perspective of radiation oncology, optimal treatment volume determination and normal tissue sparing may be considered among the critical components of optimal radiotherapeutic management. While determination of larger treatment volumes might result in excessive radiation induced toxicity, definition of smaller treatment volumes may lead to treatment failures. Adaptive RT strategies and multimodality imaging-based target definition have been suggested for achieving improved outcomes [50-104]. In the current study, we found that CT and MRI defined treatment volume determination resulted in differences. Taking this into account, fusion of CT and MRI was utilized for ground truth treatment volume definition. These results may have implications for increased adoption of multimodality imaging for treatment volume determination of VSCC, however, validation in prospective clinical studies may be required.

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