Letter to the Editor

Regarding Primary Surgery Versus Primary Radiation-Based Treatment for Locally Advanced Oropharyngeal Cancer

Dear Editor:

With great interest, we read the article “Primary Surgery Versus Primary Radiation-Based Treatment for Locally Advanced Oropharyngeal Cancer,” recently published in The Laryngoscope. The authors analyzed a huge number of oropharyngeal cancer patients and compared the radiation-based treatment with surgery-based therapies. Our experiences also show similar findings about oropharyngeal cancers. However, we would like to focus on the following two points concerning the data provided and see comments and/or data from the authors, if possible.

1. Regarding Figure 4A and 4B, there seems to be some misstatements about the data. See the below statement on page 1,361, as well as Figure 4 on page 1,362:

In the overall matched cohort (7,526 patients receiving CRT matched with 7,526 patients undergoing surgery with aRT ± CT), the 3-year actuarial survival rates for CRT and surgery with aRT ± CT were 79.6% and 84.5%, respectively ($P < 0.0001$) (Fig. 4A). In the HPV-restricted matched cohort (2,424 patients receiving CRT matched with 2,424 patients undergoing surgery with aRT ± CT), the 3-year actuarial survival rates for CRT and surgery with aRT ± CT were 84.5% and 88.5%, respectively ($P = 0.002$) (Fig. 4B).

In Figure 4A, however, the 3-year actuarial survival rates both for CRT and surgery with aRT seem to be less than 80% (not 79.6% and 84.5%, as stated above). In Figure 4B, the 3-year actuarial survival rates for CRT and surgery with aRT seem just above and under the 80%; however, surgery with aRT has worse survival than CRT (not 84.5% and 88.5%, as stated above).

2. The authors seem to have used the seventh edition of AJCC staging. However, the recently published eighth edition of AJCC provides major changes, especially for HPV + oropharyngeal cancers, mostly downgrading.

Could the authors add some additional data or analysis regarding this?

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