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Adjunctive traditional Chinese medicine therapy improves survival in patients with lung cancer

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Background: Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is widely used by patients suffered from lung cancer. Evidence shows that TCM can alleviate the complications of the lung cancer, but there is little large-scale well-designed study to evaluate the clinical effect of TCM on survival time.

Method: We conducted a retrospective cohort study by using the data provided by Health and Welfare Data Science Center to evaluate the survival time of the patients with lung cancer from 2001 to 2010. The patients were divided into TCM users (who use TCM in the first 90 days after diagnosed) and non TCM users (who do not use TCM after diagnosed). We balanced the baseline characteristic between two groups by propensity-score matching method and compare the survival curve by Kaplan-Meier curve and stratified log-rank test. Robust cox regression was used to estimate the hazard ratio (HR) with 95% confidence interval (CI).

Results: There were 2009 patients and 422 patients were TCM users and 1587 patients were non TCM users. There was no significant difference in age, gender, stage, treatment type and co-morbidities between two groups. The mean survival time is significantly longer in TCM users than in non TCM users with 715 days and 605 days respectively. Compared to non TCM users, TCM users were significantly associated with a decrease risk of death (adjusted HR=0.82, 95% CI=0.73-0.92) with multivariate adjustment. Among the late stage, there was still a significantly protective effect by using TCM with multivariate adjustment (stage III, adjusted HR=0.72, 95% CI=0.57-0.92, stage IV, adjusted HR=0.87, 95% CI=0.75-1.00).

Conclusion: Our study showed that adjunctive TCM therapy can lengthen the survival time in patients with lung cancer. The findings may be helpful to the physicians when treating the patients with lung cancer.

Biography

Hsuan-Shu Shen is an experienced Chinese Medicine Physician in Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. He is interested in the effect of the Traditional Chinese Medicine, especially in treating cancer patients. He is the Principal Investigator of the project about the efficacy of combined using Traditional Chinese Medicine among patients with cancer and willing to make contributions for treating cancer.

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