Curative versus Palliative Therapy for Patients with Colorectal Cancer Presenting to the Emergency Department

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Methods:

- We performed an IRB-approved retrospective cohort analysis.
- We queried the prospectively maintained institutional tumor registry to identify patients diagnosed with CRC from 2008–2010.
- EMRs were reviewed to identify which patients presented to the ED with acute symptoms of CRC as the initial sign of their illness.
- The primary outcome variable was treatment plan (curative vs. palliative).
- Secondary outcome variables included demographics, tumor type and location.
- Descriptive statistics were conducted for major variables.
- X² and Fisher’s exact tests were used to detect the association between continuous and categorical variables.

Results:

- Between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2010, 376 patients were identified with CRC.
- 214 (57%) were male and 162 (43%) female, with mean age 68.6; SD: 13.3.
- 33 (8.6%) patients initially presented to the ED of which 5 (15.5%) received palliation.
- Of 339 patients who initially presented elsewhere, 69 (20.5%) received palliation.
- Acute ED presentation with CRC symptoms did not preclude treatment with curative intent (p=0.47).
- Patients who presented emergently were more likely to be female (64% vs male 36%; p=0.01), and older (65 vs. 60; p=0.02).
- There was no statistically significant relationship between age, gender, tumor location or type and treatment plan (curative vs. palliative).

Background:

- Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States for men and women combined, and can present emergently with symptoms such as abdominal pain, bleeding, and obstruction.
- Emergency presentation as the first indication of colorectal cancer is generally thought to be associated with advanced disease and poor outcome.
- The specific aim of this analysis was to describe characteristics of patients presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) at their index diagnosis, and to determine whether emergency presentation precludes treatment with curative intent.

References: