

New classification system could help improve outcomes in endometrial cancer



Some women may benefit from having radiation therapy after surgery for stage 1 endometrial cancer.

INTRODUCTION

Endometrial cancer affects the lining of the womb. It is the most common cancer of the female reproductive system. If it is treated in stage 1, endometrial cancer has a good chance of getting better (often called a prognosis). The most common treatment is surgery to remove the womb (a hysterectomy). Some patients are at an increased risk of their cancer coming back. Having a course of radiation therapy (also known as radiotherapy) after surgery can give better results and make it less likely that the cancer will come back.

WHAT DID THE AUTHORS HOPE TO LEARN?

The authors wanted to compare two different systems for determining which endometrial cancer patients should have radiation therapy after surgery. The systems are called PORTEC-1 and GOG-99, and doctors use them as a tool to work out who would benefit from radiation therapy. PORTEC-1 and GOG-99 were developed from two separate clinical trials, and are similar but not quite the same, and the way they are used can vary.

WHO WAS STUDIED?

The study looked at the records of over 17,000 women with endometrial cancer. Most were over the age of 60, and everyone had been treated at clinics in the United States.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

This was a retrospective study, which means the authors used patient records that already existed instead of collecting new information. To start with, they retrieved the records for all women with stage 1 endometrial cancer, and then looked to see whether PORTEC-1 and/or GOG-99 would have identified each person as a good candidate for radiation therapy. The authors then split the groups depending on whether in real life they had gone on to have radiation therapy after surgery, and looked to see which group survived the longest.

WHAT WAS THE MAIN FINDING OF THE STUDY?

The main finding was that people who GOG-99 identified as being high or intermediate risk – but not the PORTEC-1 risk classification – might benefit from having radiation therapy. The authors used these findings to design a new classification system that uses some elements of both the previous ones. This new tool will help doctors to work out which women will benefit from having radiation therapy after surgery for endometrial cancer.

ARE THESE FINDINGS NEW?

Yes, these classification systems had not been compared like this before.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY?

This type of study can be at risk of bias because the study uses existing data that already exists instead of collecting new data. There will need to be more studies planned to double check the results.

WHAT DO THE AUTHORS PLAN TO DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

The authors plan to work to improve the classification criteria and to include other sources of information. In the meantime, they hope the findings will help guide conversations between women with stage 1 endometrial cancer and their doctors about the use of radiation therapy in their treatment plans.

WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS STUDY HAVE ON PATIENT CARE?

If you are having surgery for stage 1 endometrial cancer, your doctors may use this study to help decide whether to offer you radiation therapy afterward. Not everyone will benefit from having radiation therapy, so it is important to try to determine who it can help.

If you have any concerns about your disease or its treatment, you should talk to your doctor.

Disclaimer: This is a summary of a scientific article written by a medical professional (“the Original Article”). The Summary is written to assist non medically trained readers to understand general points of the Original Article. It is supplied “as is” without any warranty. You should note that the Original Article (and Summary) may not be fully relevant nor accurate as medical science is constantly changing and errors can occur. It is therefore very important that readers not rely on the content in the Summary and consult their medical professionals for all aspects of their health care and only rely on the Summary if directed to do so by their medical professional. Please view our full Website Terms and Conditions. <http://www.bmj.com/company/legal-information/>

Date prepared: August 2019

Summary based on research article published on: 1 September 2019

From: Li R, *et al.* A proposal for a new classification of ‘unfavorable risk criteria’ in patients with stage I endometrial cancer. *Int J Gynecol Cancer* 2019;29:1086–1093. doi:10.1136/ijgc-2019-000264

Copyright © IGCS and ESGO 2019. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ. Medical professionals may print copies for their and their patients and students non commercial use. Other individuals may print a single copy for their personal, non commercial use. For other uses please contact our [Rights and Licensing Team](#).