Hepatocellular Carcinoma

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Disclosure

- No financial or potential conflicts of interest to disclose

Outline

- Epidemiology of Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC)
- Prevention and Screening for HCC
- Treatment of HCC

Hepatocellular Carcinoma

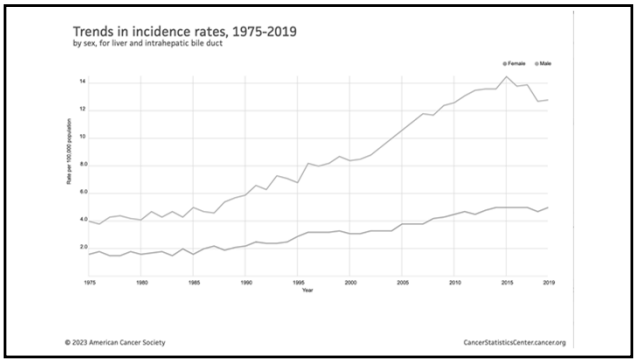
- Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the 6th most common malignancy worldwide
- It is the 3rd most common cause of cancer related mortality
- Responsible for 1 million deaths each year
- In the US, over the past 20 years, the incidence of HCC has increased
- In the US, rate of death from HCC increased by 43% between 2000 to 2016

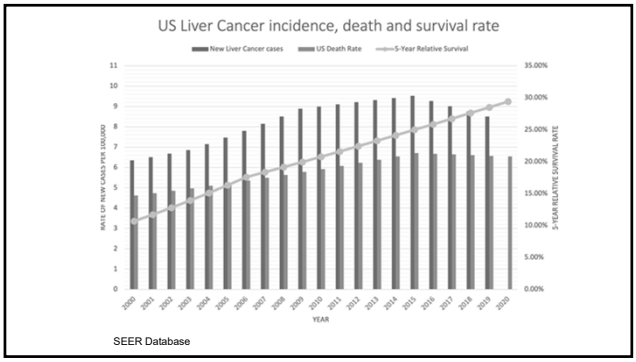
Forner et al., Lancet, 2012
CDC National Center for Health Statistics, 2018

HCC

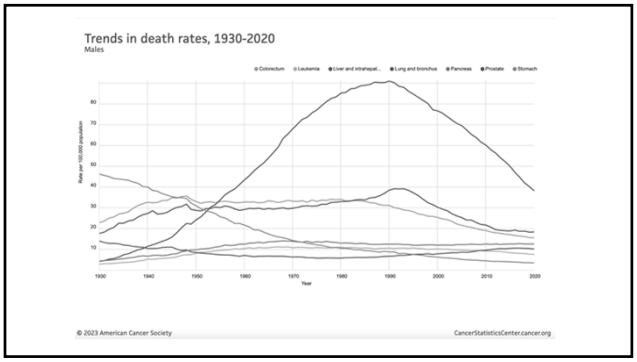
- Despite advances in screening and early detection, HCC still has a poor overall 5-year survival rate of 18-20%
- HCC is the second most lethal cancer, after pancreatic cancer
- Liver cancer incidence has tripled since 1980
- Liver cancer death rates have been increasing by an average of 3% a year over the last 10 years

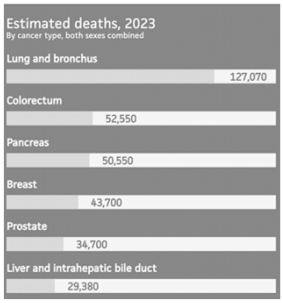
Jemal et al., J Natl Cancer Inst, 2017



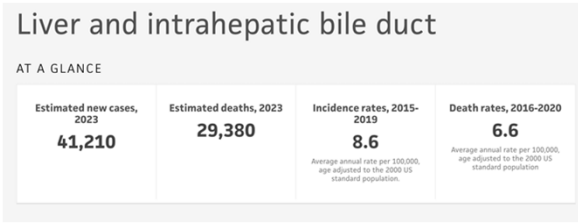


SEER Database



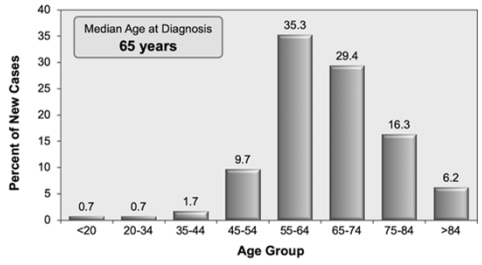


American Cancer Society

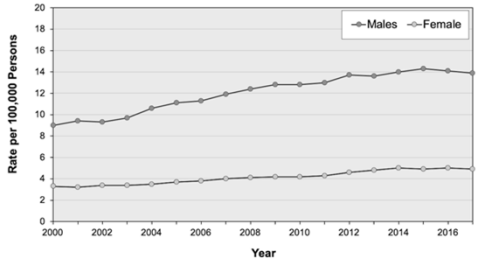


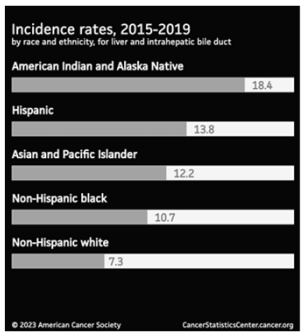
American Cancer Society

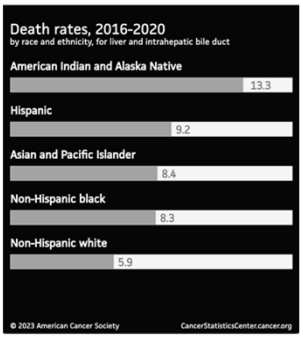
Demographics



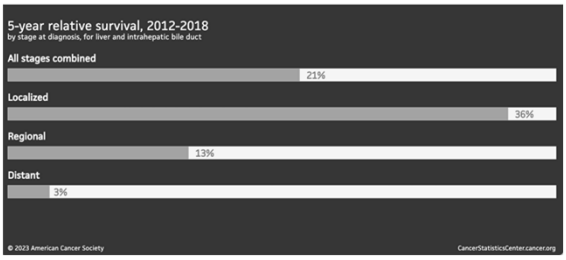
Demographics



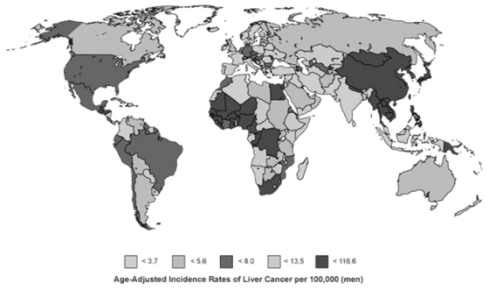




Survival



HCC is a Global Problem



Prevention

- Focus on preventing progression of chronic liver disease to cirrhosis
  - Hepatitis B vaccination *
  - Hepatitis C screening *
  - Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)
  - Alcohol
  - Autoimmune Hepatitis (AIH)
  - Primary Biliary Cirrhosis (PBC)
  - Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)

-Smoking and HIV also contribute to HCC development

NAFLD

- Incidence is increasing worldwide
- In the US, HCC incidence due to NAFLD is expected to increase by 122% between 2016 and 2030

Estes et al., J Hepatol, 2018

SCREENING

19

AASLD: Screening Guidelines

- The recommended imaging screening interval is 6 months with ultrasound +/- AFP
- Screen patients with cirrhosis and those with chronic hepatitis B with or without cirrhosis
- AFP alone should not be used for screening

Heimbach, Hepatology 2017
Kim DK, Hepatology. 2007
Bruix H, Hepatology 2005

Clinical Presentation

- Usually no additional symptoms other than those related to chronic liver disease
- High index of suspicion in patients with previously compensated cirrhosis who suddenly decompensate
- Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) lacks adequate sensitivity and specificity for effective surveillance and for diagnosis
- Not all tumors secrete AFP

Lok et al, Gastroenterology 2010;138:493-502
Forner et al, Hepatology 2008;47:97-104

Is Surveillance Effective?

- Repeated application of a screening test to an at-risk population
- Detect disease at an earlier stage when potential curative options are available and thus reducing disease-related mortality
- HCC readily lends itself to surveillance
- Randomized control trial in China
  - 18,816 patients with chronic HBV infections randomized to biannual surveillance with ultrasonography + serum α-fetoprotein (AFP) or no surveillance

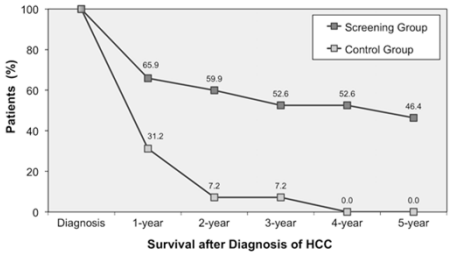
Zhang BH, Yang BH, Tang ZY. Randomized controlled trial of screening for hepatocellular carcinoma. *J Cancer Res Clin Oncol* 2004;**130**:417–422.
Trevisani F, Santi V, Gramenzi A, Di Nolfo MA, Del Poggio P, Benvegnù L, et al.;for Italian Liver Cancer Group. Surveillance for early diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma: is it effective in intermediate/advanced cirrhosis?*Am J Gastroenterol* 2007;**102**:2448–2457.

Why Screen?

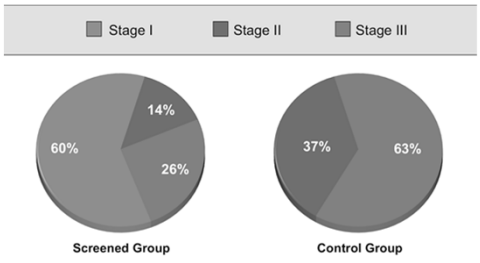
- Symptomatic advanced-stage HCC has dismal outcomes
  - 5-year life expectancy < 10%
- In comparison, HCC identified before the onset of symptoms is more amenable to treatment
  - 5-year survival rates greater than 50% for both resection and liver transplantation

Bruix J, Sherman M. Management of hepatocellular carcinoma: an update. *Hepatology* 2011;**53**:1020–1022

Screening Decreases Mortality



Zhang et al., J Cancer Res Clin Oncol. 2004



Zhang et al., J Cancer Res Clin Oncol. 2004

Who to Screen?

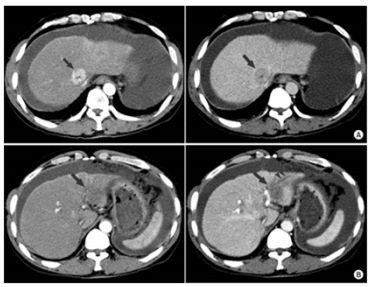
- Asian men hepatitis B carriers > 40 years
- Asian women hepatitis B carriers > 50 years
- Hepatitis B carrier with family history of HCC
- Patients with HBV and cirrhosis
- Africans and North American Blacks with hepatitis B
- All patients with cirrhosis

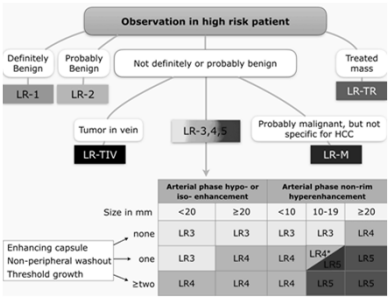
DIAGNOSIS

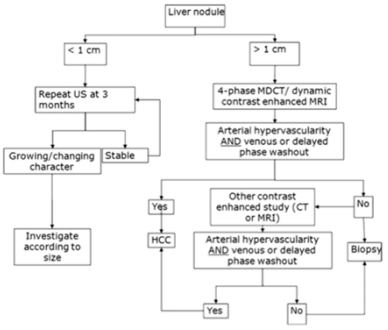
Diagnosis

- Diagnosis should be based on imaging techniques and/or biopsy
- Multiphase Imaging: intense arterial uptake followed by "washout" of contrast in the venous-delayed phases

- Size > 1 cm
- Features:
  - Arterial enhancement
  - Less bright in venous and delayed phases
  - Pseudocapsule
- Biopsy rarely indicated




Observation in high risk patient
Definitely Benign
Probably Benign
Not definitely or probably benign
Treated mass
LR-1
LR-2
LR-TR
Tumor in vein
LR-3,4,5
Probably malignant, but not specific for HCC
LR-TIV
LR-M
Arterial phase hypo- or iso- enhancement
Arterial phase non-rim hyperenhancement
Size in mm
<20
≥20
<10
10-19
≥20
Enhancing capsule
Non-peripheral washout
Threshold growth
none
one
≥two
LR3
LR4
LR5


Liver nodule
< 1 cm
> 1 cm
Repeat US at 3 months
4-phase MDCT/ dynamic contrast enhanced MRI
Growing/changing character
Stable
Arterial hypervascularity AND venous or delayed phase washout
Yes
Other contrast enhanced study (CT or MRI)
No
Investigate according to size
HCC
Arterial hypervascularity AND venous or delayed phase washout
Biopsy
Yes
No

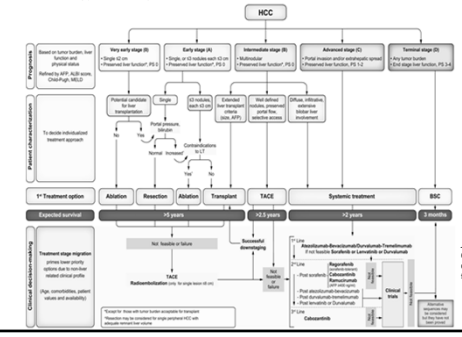
TREATMENT

Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC)

- Most widely used algorithm endorsed in clinical practice guidelines since 1999
- Used as the acceptable benchmark in clinical trial design
- Classifies patients into 5 stages
- Treatment recommends per stage
- Tumor burden quantified by number and size of nodules, presence or vascular invasion, extrahepatic spread
- Uses Child-Turcotte-Pugh for assessment of hepatic synthetic dysfunction

Llovet et al, Semin Liver Dis, 1999
EASL, J Hepatol, 2018
Marrero et al, Hepatology, 2018

BCLC strategy for prognosis prediction and treatment recommendation The 2022 update



Journal of Hepatology 2022 76681-693DOI: (10.1016/j.jhep.2021.11.018)

Liver Directed Therapy

- Liver Transplantation
- Resection/Hepatectomy
- Percutaneous Ablation (RFA)
- Transarterial Chemoembolization (TACE)
- Radioembolization: Yttrium$_{90}$ (TARE)
- Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT)

Determining Best Therapy

- Underlying liver dysfunction/hepatic reserve
  - MELD Score/Child-Turcotte-Pugh score
- Stage of disease at presentation
  - Tumor burden, size, location
- Extrahepatic spread, portal vein invasion
- Co-morbid conditions

Surgical Resection

- Potentially curative in patients with adequate liver functional reserve
- Ideal patient
  - Solitary HCC confined to the liver
  - No radiographic evidence of invasion of the hepatic vasculature
  - No evidence of portal hypertension
  - Well-preserved hepatic function
  - Platelets > 100-150
  - No cirrhosis or Child-Pugh class A cirrhosis

Assessing Surgical Risk with Cirrhosis

- CPT useful in assessing global liver function, however, significant heterogeneity among Child-Pugh class A patients
- MELD can help select ideal candidates
- Patients with a preoperative MELD >10 have 90-day mortality rates approaching 15% to 20%
- Noninvasive, indirect measures of portal hypertension
  - Platelet count of ≤100 used as surrogate for significant portal hypertension
- Tumor-specific factors in determining the suitability of hepatectomy for HCC include tumor size, tumor number, and presence of vascular invasion

Malthel SK, Kneuertz PJ, Kooby DA, Scoggins CR, Weber SM, Martin RC 2nd, et al. Importance of low preoperative platelet count in selecting patients for resection of hepatocellular carcinoma: a multi-institutional analysis. *J Am Coll Surg* 2011;**212**:638-648; Pawlik TM, Poon RT, Abdalla EK, Zorzi D, Ikai I, Curley SA, et al. Critical appraisal of the clinical and pathologic predictors of survival after resection of large hepatocellular carcinoma. *Arch Surg* 2005;**140**:450-457; discussion 457–458.

Goals of Locoregional Therapy

- Prolong survival by inducing tumor cell death and necrosis
- Slow the progression of tumors to reduce pre-transplantation dropout rates
  - Keep Milan within Milan
- Downstage tumors to meet transplantability criteria

Percutaneous Ablation

- Destruction of tumor cells achieved by injection of chemical substances (ethanol, acetic acid, or boiling saline) or by modifying the temperature (radiofrequency, microwave, laser, cryotherapy)
- Usually performed under ultrasound guidance

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

- Needle conducts a high-energy electrical current into the tumor
- Best outcomes are in patients with a single tumor <4 cm in diameter
- Well validated and utilized by many centers
- Efficacy assessed by multiphase imaging 1 month after therapy

Bruix J, Sherman M, Llovet JM, Beaugrand M, Lencioni R, Burroughs AK, Christensen E, et al. Clinical management of hepatocellular carcinoma. Conclusions of the Barcelona-2000 EASL conference. European Association for the Study of the Liver. J Hepatol 2001;35:421-430.

Transarterial Chemoembolization (TACE)

- HCC gets majority blood supply from hepatic artery
- Used most often for the treatment of large unresectable HCCs
- Also used commonly as "bridging therapy" prior to transplant
- Agents: Doxorubicin, Mitomycin C, Cisplatin

TACE: Contraindications

- Absolute contraindications
  - Absence of hepatopetal blood flow (portal vein thrombosis), biliary obstruction
- Relative contraindications:
  - Serum bilirubin >3 mg/dL
  - Tumor burden involving >50% of the liver
  - Cardiac or renal insufficiency

Radioembolization: Y90/TARE

- Intra-arterial injection of small microspheres loaded with the radionuclide yttrium-90 (Y_{90})
- Delivery of the microspheres into the feeding vessels of the tumor leads to their settling in the tumor itself without affecting the vasculature
- Beta-emitting particle that has a localized radius of radiation delivery (2.5–11.0 mm)
- 1/2-life 60 hours

Y_{90}

- Advantages:
  - Low toxicity
  - Potential to treat patients with significant tumor burden
  - Relatively limited side effects
  - Has been used with PVT
- Disadvantages:
  - High cost
  - The costs approached $17,000 for TACE versus $31,000 or $48,000 for unilobar or bilobar radioembolization
  - Requires at least two abdominal angiographies
  - Certain anatomical constraints (eg, pass-through of the radioactive material to the lung in some patients with shunting)

Radiology

ORIGINAL RESEARCH • VASCULAR AND INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY

^{90}Y Radioembolization versus Drug-eluting Bead Chemoembolization for Unresectable Hepatocellular Carcinoma: Results from the TRACE Phase II Randomized Controlled Trial

Elisabeth Ehrenah, PhD, MD • Bieke Lambert, PhD, MD • Laurens Hermie, MD • Lynn Huyck, PhD • Peter Vandenberghe, PhD, MD • Anja Geets, PhD, MD • Xavier Verhelst, PhD, MD • Marieke Arets, MD* • Aude Vandecasteele, MD • Frederik Berrevoet, PhD, MD • Roberto Ivan Troisi, PhD, MD* • Hans Van Vlierberghe, PhD, MD • Luc Defreyne, PhD, MD*

From the Departments of Vascular and Interventional Radiology (E.D., L. Hermie, L. Huyck, P.V., L.D.), Gastroenterology and Hepatology (A.G., X.V., M.A., H.V.V.), and General and HPB Surgery and Liver Transplantation (A.V., F.B.), Ghent University Hospital, C. Heymanslaan 10, 9000 Ghent, Belgium; and the Departments of Diagnostic Sciences (B.L.) and Human Structure and Repair (R.I.T.), Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. Received July 23, 2021; revision requested September 21; revision received December 1; accepted December 23. Address correspondence to E.D. (e-mail: *Elisabeth.ehrenah@ugent.be*).

-single center prospective randomized controlled trial: TARE vs TACE

-BCLC stage B (intermediate) and stage A (early) not eligible for resection, ablation, or transplant HCC

-70 participants received treatment and followed

Radiology, Volume: 303, Pages: 699-710, 2022

TACE vs. TARE (Y90)

- Time to tumor progression
  - 17.1 months (TARE) vs 9.5 months (DEB-TACE); P = .002
- Overall survival
  - 30.2 months (TARE) vs 15.6 months (DEB-TACE); P = .006

Radiology, Volume: 303, Pages: 699-710, 2022

Locoregional Therapy Summary

Table 1. Summary of Locoregional Therapy Options for Hepatocellular Carcinoma.

Modality	Techniques	Clinical Utility	Risks	Benefits
TAE	Particulate or liquid embolic agents	Disease control (BCLC B) and bridging/downstaging to transplant (BCLC A, B).	PES, liver failure, liver abscess/biloma	Improves OS vs. best supportive care. Avoids chemotherapy toxicity. Less expensive than TACE.
TACE	Conventional emulsified chemotherapeutic agent (c-TACE) or drug-eluting beads (DEB-TACE)	Same as TAE. Can combine with portal vein embolization before resection.	PES, liver failure, liver abscess/biloma	Improves OS vs. best supportive care. Simultaneous embolic and chemotherapeutic effects.
TARE	Yttrium-90 radioisotope loaded onto microspheres	Same as TAE/TACE. RS for nonsurgical early stage patients (BCLC 0, A). Can also be used in portal vein thrombosis.	RILD, radiation-induced pneumonitis, PES, liver failure, liver abscess/biloma	Higher quality of life/TTP vs. TACE. RS outcomes comparable to curative-intent treatments (e.g., resection and ablation) at 5 years
Ablation	Microwaves, radiofrequency alternating current, laser, cooling	Early stage HCC < 2–3 cm in non-surgical candidates (BCLC 0, A). Improved outcomes for tumors 3–5 cm when combined with TACE.	PAS, bleeding, adjacent organ injury	Similar outcomes as resection for tumors < 3 cm.

PES—postembolization syndrome. PAS—postablation syndrome. OS—overall survival. RILD—radiation-induced liver disease. CP—Childs-Pugh class. RS—radiation segmentectomy. TTP—time to progression.

Cancers, Volume: 12, July 2020

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Liver Transplantation for the Treatment of Small Hepatocellular Carcinomas in Patients with Cirrhosis

Vincenzo Mazzaferro, M.D., Enrico Regalia, M.D., Roberto Doci, M.D., Salvatore Andreola, M.D., Andrea Pulvirenti, M.D., Federico Bozzetti, M.D., Fabrizio Montalto, M.D., Mario Ammatuna, M.D., Alberto Morabito, Ph.D., and Leandro Gennari, M.D., Ph.D.

- Inclusion criteria: single lesion ≤ 5 cm, 2-3 lesions each ≤ 3 cm, no evidence of extra-hepatic disease
- Diagnosis: biopsy or AFP > 300 ng/ml
- 48 transplants during study period

Total Hepatectomy with Liver Transplantation for Early-Stage HCC

- Following liver transplantation
  - Actuarial survival at 4 yrs: 75%
  - Recurrence-free survival at 4 years: 83%

Mazzaferro V, et al N Engl J Med. 1996;334:693-699

Liver Transplantation for Hepatocellular Carcinoma: Beyond the Milan Criteria

American Journal of Transplantation, Volume: 8, Issue: 10, Pages: 1982-1989, First published: 16 September 2008

MELD Exception Points

- To give patients with Stage II HCC equal opportunity for transplantation
- Initially given additional points aimed at matching the risk of death in endstage cirrhosis
- Too high a priority was given to HCC patients - unfair to patients without cancer
- Has undergone several iterations
- Most recent: Can only start accumulating exception points after being on the waitlist for 6 months. Awarded additional points at 6 months based on regional median MELD score
- Allows time to assess tumor biology

Bruix and Sherman, Hepatology, July 2010
Freeman RB, Wiesner RH, Edwards E, Harper A, Merion R, Wolfe R. Results of the first year of the new liver allocation plan. Liver Transpl 2004;10:7–15

MELD Exception Points

- US => Milan Criteria
- T2 Lesions to qualify for MELD exception points:
  - AFP ≤ 1000 ng/ml
  - One lesion 2-5 cm
  - Two or three lesions each 1-3 cm
  - NO vascular or extrahepatic invasion

Liver Transplantation

- Liver Transplantation is now accepted as the best curative therapy for Stage II HCC
- Provides complete oncologic resection and correction of the underlying liver disease

Liver Transplantation

- Advantages
  - Definitive management of not only HCC but also underlying liver disease
- Disadvantages
  - Long waiting time for donor organs
  - Lifelong immunosuppression

Liver Transplantation

- Use of marginal grafts and living donation have increased organ pool
- Significant gap remains between available donor and patient awaiting transplant

Systemic Therapy

- Advanced, unresectable HCC
- NOT amenable to curative or locoregional therapy
- Adequate performance status

Systemic Therapy

- HCC considered to be a relatively chemotherapy-refractory tumor
- High rate of expression of drug resistance genes
- Challenging to gauge benefit from chemotherapy in patients with advanced HCC
- Survival is most often determined by degree of hepatic dysfunction
- Systemic chemotherapy is usually not well tolerated by patients with significant underlying hepatic dysfunction

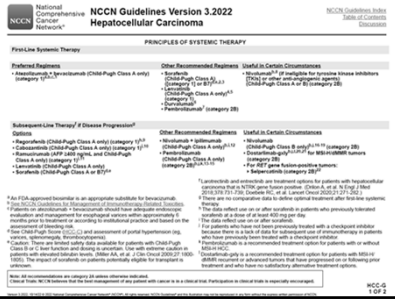
SHARP TRIAL

- Placebo-controlled, phase III trial
- Patients with Child-Pugh A and HCC compatible with stage C disease by the BCLC system
- Median survival nearly 3 months compared to placebo 10.7 months vs. 7.9 (p<0.001)
- Largely stabilized the tumor by delaying tumor progression → mainly acts as a cytostatic agent
- Led to approval by regulatory agencies in 2007 (USA and EU)

Llovet JM, Ricci S, Mazzaferro V, Hilgard P, Gane E, Blanc JF, et al. Sorafenib in advanced hepatocellular carcinoma. *N Engl J Med* 2008;**359**:378–390

Hepatocellular Carcinoma

Systemic Therapy



NCCN Guidelines Version 3.2022
Hepatocellular Carcinoma

PRINCIPLES OF SYSTEMIC THERAPY

First-Line Systemic Therapy

Preferred Regimens	Other Recommended Regimens	Useful in Certain Circumstances
• Atezolizumab + bevacizumab (Child-Pugh Class A only) (category 1)[1,2,3,7]	• Sorafenib (Child-Pugh Class A) (category 1) or BSC[1,2,3] • Lenvatinib (Child-Pugh Class A only)[1,3] (category 1) • Nivolumab[1,3] • Pembrolizumab[1] (category 2B)	• Nivolumab[1,3] (if ineligible for tyrosine kinase inhibitors [TKIs] or other antiangiogenic agents) (Child-Pugh Class A or B) (category 2B)

Subsequent-Line Therapy[6] if Disease Progression[5]

Options	Other Recommended Regimens	Useful in Certain Circumstances
• Regorafenib (Child-Pugh Class A only) (category 1)[1,3] • Cabozantinib (Child-Pugh Class A only) (category 1)[1,10] • Ramucirumab (AFP ≥400 ng/mL and Child-Pugh Class A only) (category 1)[1,11] • Lenvatinib (Child-Pugh Class A only) • Sorafenib (Child-Pugh Class A or B)[1,3]	• Nivolumab + ipilimumab (Child-Pugh Class A only)[1,12] • Pembrolizumab (Child-Pugh Class A only) (category 2B)[1,3,13]	• Nivolumab[1,3] (Child-Pugh Class B only)[1,10,14] (category 2B) • Dostarlimab-gxly[1,3,15,16] for MSI-H/dMMR tumors (category 2B) • For *RET* gene fusion-positive tumors: • Selpercatinib (category 2B)[3,6]

[1] Larotrectinib and entrectinib are treatment options for patients with hepatocellular carcinoma that is NTRK gene fusion positive. (Chiken A, et al. N Engl J Med 2018;378:731-739; Doebele RC, et al. Lancet Oncol 2020;21:271-282.)

[2] There are no comparative data to define optimal treatment after first-line systemic therapy.

[3] The data reflect use on or after sorafenib in patients who previously tolerated sorafenib at a dose of at least 400 mg per day.

[4] The data reflect use on or after sorafenib.

[5] For patients who have not been previously treated with a checkpoint inhibitor and for whom there is a lack of data on subsequent use of immunotherapy in patients who have previously been treated with a checkpoint inhibitor.

[6] Pembrolizumab is a recommended treatment option for patients with or without MSI-H HCC.

[7] Dostarlimab-gxly is a recommended treatment option for patients with MSI-H/dMMR recurrent or advanced tumors that have progressed on or following prior treatment and who have no satisfactory alternative treatment options.

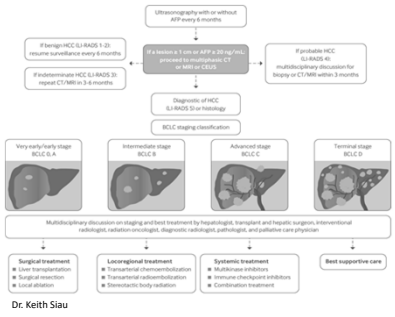
Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.
Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any patient with cancer is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

HCC-G
1 OF 2

Systemic Therapy

- Atezolizumab + bevacizumab **OR** Tremelimumab + durvalumab
  - Child A, no anticoagulation, no recurrence after liver transplant
- Tyrosine-Kinase inhibitors: Lenvatinib or sorafenib
  - Child A or B, post-transplant
- Immunotherapy: immune checkpoint inhibitors
  - Contraindicated post-transplant

Summary

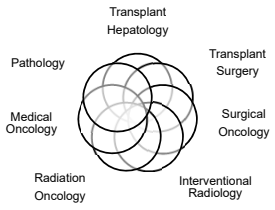


Dr. Keith Siau

Conclusion

- Incidence and death rate of HCC is increasing
- Screening is vital
- HCC is a complex disease for which multidisciplinary care is warranted
- For patients with cirrhosis and portal hypertension, mainstay of therapy should be transplant if appropriate
- LRT can be used to bridge patients to transplant

Multidisciplinary Team




THANK YOU
The Ohio State University