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Prognostic significance of the serosal invasion in hepatocellular carcinoma

Incheon KANG¹, Dai Hoon HAN^{*2}

¹Department of Surgery, CHA Bundang Medical Center, CHA University School of Medicine, Seongnam, Korea

²Department of Surgery, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea

Introduction: The prognostic significance of serosal invasion (SI) was not clarified in patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). We investigated the impact of SI for the long-term outcome after curative surgical resection in patients with HCC.

Methods: In total, 783 consecutive patients with HCC who underwent curative surgical resection without any preoperative treatment were histologically evaluated for SI. Patients with SI were classified into two groups: positive for SI (pSI; n = 333) and negative for SI (nSI; n = 450). Clinicopathologic features, disease-free survival (DFS), and overall survival (OS) were compared between patients with pSI and nSI.

Results: The pSI group showed more aggressive tumor characteristics, such as higher tumor marker levels (alpha-fetoprotein, $p = 0.023$; protein induced by vitamin K absence-II, $p = 0.016$), larger tumor size ($p < 0.001$), higher prevalence of microvascular invasion ($p = 0.002$), and poorer differentiation ($p = 0.002$), than the nSI group. In survival analysis, 5-year DFS was 48.1%, 61.2% in the pSI, nSI, respectively ($p < 0.001$), while 5-year OS was 74.8%, 86.1%, respectively ($p = 0.002$). In multivariate analysis, SI was an independent prognostic factor for DFS ($p = 0.043$) and OS ($p = 0.042$).

Conclusions: The SI was associated with more aggressive clinicopathologic characteristics and a higher risk of poor survival. Therefore, intensive careful follow-up is essential for patients with pSI after curative surgical resection in patients with HCC.

Corresponding Author: Dai Hoon HAN (dhhan@yuhs.ac)

Presenter: Incheon KANG (vorbote@cha.ac.kr)

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