ASO AUTHOR REFLECTIONS

ASO Author Reflections: Stage 4 Laryngeal Cancer Rising in the United States

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PAST

Survival of patients with laryngeal cancer declined from 1985 to 2001, concurrent with the period during which organ preservation protocols were developed.¹ Significant controversy arose regarding the driving force of this decline, and it remains unknown whether this downward trend in survival has continued into the current era.

PRESENT

Survival of patients with laryngeal cancer in the United States from 2004 to 2016 showed no significant change in 2- or 5-year observed survival (range, 54.3–56.5%).² Despite the lack of change in survival, upward stage migration occurred with each increasing year, conferring an additional risk of 2.2% for stage 4 disease. This was driven in large part by a 4.7% yearly increase in N2 disease, and to smaller degrees by 1.2% annual increases in T3 and T4 disease. The strongest demographic association with stage 4 disease was black race.

FUTURE

Although survival of patients with laryngeal cancer is no longer declining, modern treatment and technologic advances have not translated to improved survival. These advances may be negated by stage migration toward an

increasing proportion of stage 4 disease. Black race was identified as strongly associated with stage 4 disease, and previous findings have shown black race to be associated also with worse outcomes in other cancers.³ Efforts should be directed toward early detection and timely treatment of laryngeal cancer to obtain incremental improvements in survival commensurate with the advances in laryngeal cancer treatment protocols.

DISCLOSURE There are no conflicts of interest.

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