Author’s response to reviews

Title: Complete pathological response (ypT0N0M0) after preoperative chemotherapy alone for stage IV rectal cancer

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Re: Revised original article (MS: 1012080348952864)

Dear Dr. Rowles,

Thank you very much for allowing us to submit a revised version of our manuscript “Complete pathological response (ypT0N0M0) after preoperative chemotherapy alone for stage IV rectal cancer” (MS: 1012080348952864). Please find below a point-by-point reply to the Reviewers’ comments.

Reply to Dr. Yoji Kishi:
- This was an interesting case report that suggested chemotherapy without radiation can also control the rectal cancer.
  Thank you very for your interest in the present case.

- What are the criteria for the reverse treatment for colorectal cancer with synchronous approach in the authors’ institution?
  At our institution, the reversed approach is considered in patients with “advanced” synchronous liver colo-rectal metastases, including patients with multiple, often large metastases not accessible for minor (up to two segments) resection. The management strategy of these patients has been recently described in a review (Mentha et al. Semin Liver Dis 2013;33:262–272). Of note, 92 patients have been thus far managed with a reversed strategy at our institution.

- Did the authors have any experience of complete response with systemic chemotherapy for initially unresectable colorectal cancer?
  We have not observed a complete histological response in a patient with initially unresectable colorectal metastases. However, seven patients demonstrated complete histological responses of all metastases after chemotherapy (TRG1), including a patients with a single large (14 cm) original lesion.

- Endoscopic or radiologic images of the rectal and metastatic lesions before chemotherapy should be presented.
  Thank you for the suggestion. We have added the proposed images.
Reply to Dr. Andres Cervantes:
- This case report is very clear and well written and it delivers a very clean message.
Thank you very much for your kind comments.

- The only point is that the first sentence in the abstract "Complete pathological response occurs in up to 25% of patients with rectal cancer who are treated with neoadjuvant chemoradiation therapy prior to pelvic surgery" is too optimistic. This statement is repeated in the main text in the Background section (second paragraph, page 4). However, when the same point is addressed at the Conclusions, the authors state: "Overall, 10-20 % of patients achieve a complete rectal pathological response after chemoradiation.", which is more realistic, but conflicting with the previous sentence. I would recommend changing in the abstract as well as in the Background, indicating that “Complete pathological response occurs in 10-20% of patients with rectal cancer who are treated with neoadjuvant chemoradiation therapy prior to pelvic surgery”.
Thank you for your suggestion. We have revised the abstract and the background accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

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