Author’s response to reviews

Title: Patterns of Recurrence after Surgery and Efficacy of Salvage Therapy after Recurrence in Patients with Thoracic Esophageal Squamous Cell Carcinoma

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer 1:
The study is retrospective and with some bias. However, the results are of interest, in part confirming previous studies. While data about surgery and radiotherapy are complete and well discussed, few info are reported about the chemotherapy regimen and nothing about treatment toxicities and tolerability. The authors should address and discuss this aspect in the manuscript.

Response: Dear professor Evelina Miele, thanks for your comments.

The detailed information of chemotherapy regimen was added. (Patients and treatments section, line 104-106, page 5)

Toxicities related to treatment were very low, and tolerability was well. Limited by length of the article and number of charts, I will address these information here for you. The most common acute complications associated with chemo-radiotherapy were myelosuppression, radiation esophagitis, and radiation dermatitis, the majority of which were Grade 1-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 1-2 (%)</th>
<th>Grade 3 (%)</th>
<th>Grade 4 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal</td>
<td>20 (10.4)</td>
<td>3 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leukocytopenia</td>
<td>44 (22.8)</td>
<td>17 (8.8)</td>
<td>3 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anemia</td>
<td>4 (2.1)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrombocytopenic</td>
<td>4 (2.1)</td>
<td>2 (1.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radiation esophagitis</td>
<td>38 (19.7)</td>
<td>2 (1.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiation pneumonia</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radiodermatitis</td>
<td>39 (20.2)</td>
<td>3 (1.6)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewer 2:

Dear professor Junaid Ahmed, thanks for your comments. Here are all my responses to the comments.

1. In Abstract, under the section of Results, please paraphrase the following grammatically incorrect sentence- 'The median time to failure was 7.0 months'

Response: I have changed the sentence into 'The median time of failure was 7.0 months'. (Abstract section, line 38, page 2)
2. In Introduction section, what do you mean by 'preset' in the following sentence-'In the preset study, we aimed to retrospectively analyze the patterns of relapse and therapeutic efficacy of salvage therapy in our institution'.

Response: Sorry, it’s a spelling mistake. The correct form is ‘present’. I have modified it. (Introduction section, line 84, page 4)

3. Under the patients & treatments section, paraphrase and split the long sentence into smaller and more comprehensible short sentences-'Best supportive care involved nutritional support therapy, analgesic therapy, and anti-infective therapy, among others, and the main objectives were to correct malnutrition, electrolyte disturbance, and acid and base balance disorders, as well as to improve the quality of life'.

Response: I have simplified the sentence. (Patients and treatments section, line 106-108, page 5)

4. The Results section needs to be shortened and only the significant results can be highlighted for a better and easier understanding.

Response: Thanks for the reviewer's comments. We agree with the reviewer that the result section of our manuscript is a bit longer. However, the result section can hardly be shortened according to following considerations:

- Compared with other retrospective studies, the data of our study is relatively more detailed and complete. So we can analyse more aspects. And the results of our study are consistent with clinical practice, which has a very important guiding role in clinical practice. Furthermore, the report about the relationship between survival and site of recurrence is few. So we think all the results are essential and indispensable. So we don’t simplify the results section.

I will be very appreciate, if you have more advice.

5. Discussion is too long and needs to be trimmed and only the significant results need to be discussed to the point.

Response: Thanks for the reviewer's comments. We agree with the reviewer that the discussion section of our manuscript is a bit longer. However, the discussion section can hardly be shortened according to following considerations:

- The data of our study is relatively more detailed and complete. And the sample size is relatively larger. All results are statistically significant, which are supported by related researches. Therefore, we think it is necessary to fully explain our findings in the discussion part.

6. Quality of written english needs to be improved
Response: Following the reviewer's advice, the manuscript has been carefully polished by a native English speaker with science background.