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Willingness to vaccinate and side effects of COVID-19 vaccination in patients with breast cancer and gynecological malignancies

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Background

Cancer patients are at increased risk of developing severe COVID-19 disease. Possible side effects of systemic therapy and the lack of clinical data on safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination in cancer patients cause uncertainty regarding the vaccination. Here, we evaluated attitude towards and effects of COVID-19 vaccination in patients with breast or gynecological cancer. The aim was to improve counseling of our patients in clinical routine.

Methods

Since March 15th 2021, patients who received one of the approved COVID-19 vaccines were routinely interviewed about immediate (0-2 days) and late side effects (within two weeks after vaccination). Clinical parameters such as current therapy, time interval between therapy administration and vaccination, and changes in the therapy schedule due to the vaccination were documented. Furthermore, the willingness of non-vaccinated patients to be vaccinated was assessed. The collected data were anonymously analyzed as a part of routine quality assurance.

Results

By May 10th 2021, 111 out of 217 (51.1%) interviewed patients had received at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine and 21 patients both shots. More than half of the vaccinated patients were >55y (60.2%; mean: 60.7y, range 30-92y); 69% with UICC/FIGO stage III/IV cancer. 74.6% received Comirnaty (BioNTech/ Pfizer), 18.9% Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) and 6.5% Covid-19 Vaccine Moderna. After the first shot, 33.3% of the patients described no side effects, 49.1% reported a local reaction (swelling or pain), 23.4% flu-like symptoms, 10.8% headache and 3.6% nausea. 11 patients had symptoms that lasted longer than two days. In 11 cases, COVID-19 vaccination had an impact on delivery of the systemic therapy (n=10 postponements of therapy and n=1 dose reduction). 61.3% of the non-vaccinated patients (in total n=118) were already registered to get vaccinated; 32.8% chose to postpone vaccination for personal reasons; 5% refused vaccination.

Conclusions

Breast and gynecological cancer patients appear to tolerate COVID-19 vaccination well under systemic therapy and only in few cases the vaccination interfered with the treatment schedule. Updated results will be presented at the ESMO Congress.

Legal entity responsible for the study

LMU University Hospital.

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Disclosure

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