ABSTRACT

Outcome Objectives: Describe the socioeconomic status of patients with malignant tumors of the head and neck. Correlate socioeconomic features with the tumor staging and overall survival.

Methods: Retrospective analysis of patients with head and neck cancers referred to an Oncological Center from January 2011 to December 2013. Only patients with social evaluation were included in the study. Socioeconomic determinants such as education, profession, professional activity, income type, marital status and family structure were analysed. These features were correlated with the tumor staging and with the overall survival.

Results: A total of 308 patients, 285 males and 23 females, with an age average of 56.7±11.3 years were included in the study. 87.6% had only basic education and 5.9% illiteracy. Only 30.8% were professionally active. Of those who were inactive 52.6% were unemployed or dependent from social support from the state and 47.4% were retired. Single, divorced and widowers patients reached the Oncologic center in more advanced stage of disease compared with married patients or patients that lived in a consensual union (p=0.02). Patients who lived in homes without any familiar or emotional bonds with other cohabitants had worse overall survival (p=0.03). Other social features didn’t show statistical significance.

Conclusion: Patients with head and neck cancer included in this study are mainly from a lower socioeconomic class. Marital status and the familiar structure influenced the tumor staging and the overall survival respectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Although socioeconomic characteristics of head and neck cancer (HNC) patients can vary between countries and regions several studies established that low socioeconomic class is an independent risk factor for HNC. The socioeconomic impact can go way beyond and cause diagnosis delay and also influence in the prognosis of these patients. This study aims to describe the socioeconomic status of patients with malignant tumors of the head and neck referred to an Oncological center and also correlate socioeconomic features with the tumor staging and with the overall survival.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Retrospective analysis of patients with head and neck cancers referred to a Portuguese Oncological Center from January 2011 to December 2013. Only patients with malignant conditions and with social evaluation were included in the study. Patients with salivary gland and thyroid cancer were excluded from the study. The Socioeconomic determinants such as education, profession, professional activity, income type, marital status and family structure were analyzed. These features were correlated with the tumor staging and with the overall survival.

RESULTS

n=308
285♂ and 23♀
Average age: 56.7±11.3 years
Follow-up: 32.6 ± 13.2 months

DISCUSSION

Patients with head and neck cancer included in this study are mainly from a lower socioeconomic class, with high incidence in patients with low education, construction and manufacturing workers. Married patients are referred to the center in an earlier stage of disease. This was already described in other studies and was attributed to spousal surveillance on visual and symptomatic HNC types. Patients with poor family support had worst overall survival.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of family support in HNC patients.

REFERENCES