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Changes in the Laboratory Data for Cancer Patients Treated with Korean-medicine-based Inpatient Care

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Abstract

Objectives: The study aimed to determine changes in laboratory data for cancer patients receiving Korean medicine (KM) care, with a focus on patients' functional status, cancer-coagulation factors and cancer immunity.

Methods: We conducted an observational study of various cancer patients in all stages admitted to the East-West Cancer Center (EWCC), Dunsan Korean Hospital of Daejeon University, from Mar. 2011 to Aug. 2011. All patients were under the center's multi-modality Korean-medicine-based inpatient cancer care program. The hospitalization stay at EWCC ranged from 9 to 34 days. A total of 80 patients were followed in their routine hematologic laboratory screenings performed before and after hospitalization. Patients were divided into three groups depending on the status of their treatment: prevention of recurrence and metastasis group, KM treatment only group, and combination of conventional and KM treatment group. The lab reports included natural killer cell count (CD16 + CD56), fibrinogen, white blood cell (WBC), lymphocytes, monocytes, neutrophil, red blood cell (RBC), hemoglobin, platelet, Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR), and Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status.

Results: With a Focus on patients' functional status, cancer-coagulation factors and cancer immunity, emphasis was placed on the NK cell count, fibrinogen count, and ECOG scores. Data generally revealed decreased fibrinogen count, fluctuating NK cell count and decreased ECOG, meaning improved performance status in all groups. The KM treatment only group showed the largest decrease in mean fibrinogen count and the largest increase in mean NK cell count. However, the group's ECOG score showed the smallest decrease, which may be due to the concentration of late-cancer-stage patients in that particular group.

Conclusions: Multi-modality KM inpatient care may have positive effect on lowering the cancer coagulation factor fibrinogen, but its correlation with the change in the NK cell count is not clear.

Keywords: cancer coagulation, cancer immunity, fibrinogen, natural killer cells, Korean medicine, complementary alternative medicine

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