Unilateral Radiotherapy in Node Positive Patients with Lateralized Tonsillar Carcinoma

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Location of Tonsil Cancer

Liu et al. 2013 Wiley Online Library.
Neck Stage

- Considered safe to treat only one neck side if N0 or N1

- Neck Stage
  - N0 no spread to neck lymph nodes
  - N1 single lymph node < 3 cm
  - N2 more than 1 lymph node or > 3 cm
  - N3 more than 6 cm

- Little data about safety of treating only one side of the neck for N2 disease
Methods/Results

• 153 patients from 1997 – 2012

• 125 (82%) lateralization was documented and plan was available
  
  o 83 had bilateral treatment; current standard
  o 42 had unilateral treatment; 76% N2 neck disease
  o No patient with unilateral treatment had recurrence in the untreated neck
Unilateral Radiation Therapy
Conclusions

• Results support the concept that the location of the tonsil cancer - rather than the amount of cancer in one side of the neck - drives the risk of cancer spread to the other neck

• Suggest that it is safe to treat only one side of the neck for lateralized tonsil cancer

• Less normal tissue treated = less toxicity

• Like to see additional studies/trials