for stage IIIA disease. Furthermore, locoregional recurrence was not different between groups, but distant recurrence was significantly greater for the pneumonectomy patients invoking the more advanced stage in this group. It is not entirely clear if neoadjuvant or adjuvant therapy was employed in these patients and if there was any impact on survival.

This study represents the largest single-center study comparing outcomes for sleeve lobectomy and pneumonectomy. One should take note that recurrence was greater for pneumonectomy in all stages and was most significant for stage III disease. The distinction of worse overall and disease-free survival of pneumonectomy (n = 250) versus sleeve lobectomy (n = 256) for N2 disease is a novel finding and is rather striking on the Kaplan–Meier curves in the supplementary data. This observation may be a metric that surgeons can use when considering pneumonectomy for resectable N2 disease where clearance of all original central lymphatic disease may become less important with improving systemic therapies.

References

Commentary: To sleeve or not to sleeve: Still a question?

Kenneth P. Seastedt, MD,a and Chuong D. Hoang, MDb

Despite sleeve resections being performed since the 1940s as an alternative to pneumonectomy for lung cancers, the benefits of this technique continued to be debated.1 Chen and colleagues,2 in this issue of the Journal, retrospectively summarize their experience of patients who underwent pneumonectomy versus bronchial sleeve resection (with or without vascular sleeve or arterioplasty) for centrally located tumors. It represents among the largest series and attempts to improve the ongoing discussion regarding the benefits of sleeve resection.3 Certainly, their results will serve as a benchmark for future clinical comparisons.

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Disclosures: The authors reported no conflicts of interest.

The Journal policy requires editors and reviewers to disclose conflicts of interest and to decline handling or reviewing manuscripts for which they may have a conflict of interest. The editors and reviewers of this article have no conflicts of interest.

Received for publication Aug 30, 2020; revisions received Aug 30, 2020; accepted for publication Aug 31, 2020; available ahead of print Sept 3, 2020.

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J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg 2021;162:1630-1
0022-5223/50.00
Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcvs.2020.08.100

CENTRAL MESSAGE
Analysis of a large, single-institution series of sleeve resection versus pneumonectomy for central lung cancer supports the preference of a lung-sparing technique whenever the anatomy is permissible.
treatment arm. The authors found significant differences among those patients undergoing sleeve resection compared with pneumonectomy that include lower 90-day mortality, lower postoperative complications, lower incidence of bronchopleural fistula, lower rates of postoperative acute respiratory distress syndrome, and shorter postoperative stay. Regarding survival differences, the authors analyzed each study cohort according to 3 groupings of 5-year intervals: 2003-2007, 2008-2012, and 2013-2017. Sleeve lobectomy significantly improved 1-, 3-, and 5-year overall survival (OS) and disease-free survival (DFS) compared with pneumonectomy. At 3 years, there were fewer overall recurrences in the sleeve resection group, with no significant difference in local recurrence. Five-year OS and DFS were significantly longer in the sleeve group for N0 and N2 nodal status, but not for N1 disease.

Overall, this report echoes some findings of previous studies but, given the multiple instances of dissimilarity from historical data, certain results should be interpreted with caution. Namely, postoperative complications after sleeve (3.61%) and pneumonectomy (8.72%) were exceedingly low compared with other series, as exemplified in a meta-analysis of 14,194 patients reporting rates of 29.3% and 30.6% respectively. The authors did not observe any arrhythmias in either group over the entire 15-year study, which raises concerns for unaccounted data. In addition, they found improved OS and DFS for N2 disease with sleeve resection, whereas previous reports found no difference. Lastly, clinical practices evolved over the long time-span of this analysis, which can bias outcome measures in a complex manner. For example, endobronchial ultrasound mediastinal staging and positron emission tomography scan were only employed in the most recent 5-year interval, leading to a lower incidence of N2 and stage III as compared with the earlier time intervals. The less-rigorous clinical staging in the earlier time intervals may have skewed the outcomes (ie, recurrence rate, 3-, or 5-year survival) to obscure the specific effects of the surgical method used.

This report and many others support sleeve resection for patients with appropriate anatomy because of similar oncologic outcomes, improved quality of life, and cost-effectiveness. It will not be practical to compare these surgical approaches in a randomized prospective manner. However, given continuous technical advancement in medicine and technology, we look forward to the conversation centering on the best approach of sleeve resection for yet-unanswered questions of tissue coverage, open versus minimally invasive, and the impact of neoadjuvant/adjuvant therapy on outcomes.

References