Impact of COVID-19 on the management of patients with metastatic melanoma

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Demographic factors, comorbidities and therapy regime of the patients in percentage, age in years. Credit: 2022 Welti et al.

A new research paper titled "Impact of COVID-19 on the management of patients with metastatic melanoma" has been published in Oncotarget.

The COVID-19 pandemic created new uncertainties in the management
of metastatic melanoma patients. In particular, the impact of immunotherapy, targeted therapy or chemotherapy on the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and severity was debated.

In this study, researchers Michèle Welti, Phil F. Cheng, Joanna Mangana, Mitchell P. Levesque, Reinhard Dummer, and Laurence Imhof from University Hospital Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich analyzed all patients with metastatic melanoma receiving therapy at the University Hospital Zürich who developed COVID-19 between February 2020 and February 2022.

"We retrospectively collected demographic data, cancer-specific parameters, melanoma treatment regimen, comorbidities and COVID-19-specific parameters in these patients," the researchers state.

Of the 350 patients with metastatic melanoma, 25 had COVID-19. The median age at the time of COVID-19 diagnosis was 66 years (range 36–86), 10 patients were female and 15 patients were male. The treatment regimen during infection was immunotherapy in 12 cases, followed by targeted therapy (n = 8), chemotherapy (n = 2) and TVEC injections, follow-up and palliative therapy in 1 case each.

The severity was mild in 17 patients and 8 had a moderate to critical course. Patients with a severe COVID-19 course were often older and had more comorbidities than patients with a mild infection. Many of the patients had a mild COVID-19 course despite having metastatic melanoma and systemic therapy.

The researchers conclude, "We therefore recommend continuing systemic therapy whenever possible, even in such exceptional situations as the COVID-19 pandemic."

More information: Michèle Welti et al, Impact of Covid-19 on the
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