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Outcome Analysis of First-Line Somatostatin Analog Treatment in Metastatic Pulmonary Neuroendocrine Tumors and Prognostic Significance of ^{18}F FDG-PET/CT

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1 ORIGINAL ARTICLE

2

3 **Outcome Analysis of First-Line Somatostatin Analog**

4 **Treatment in Metastatic Pulmonary Neuroendocrine Tumors**

5 **and Prognostic Significance of ¹⁸F-FDG-PET/CT**

6

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24

25 **MicroAbstract**

26 The purpose of the present study was to investigate the efficacy of Somatostatin
27 Analogs (SSAs) as first- line treatment of metastatic non-functioning Neuroendocrine
28 Pulmonary Carcinoids.

29 Our results showed that both Lanreotide and Octreotide improved tumor control with
30 very few side-effects in progressive metastatic lung neuroendocrine carcinoids patients .
31 Moreover, ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT positivity was an independent prognostic factor of
32 progression-free survival identifying more aggressive tumors that may only marginally
33 benefit from SSA treatment alone.

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48 **ABSTRACT**

49 **Introduction:** Pulmonary carcinoids (PCs) are classed according to the WHO 2004
50 classification as typical (TC) or atypical carcinoids (AC). Due to their rarity, no
51 dedicated clinical trials with somatostatin analogs (SSAs) have been carried out on
52 primary PCs.

53 **Methods:** From January 2007 to December 2015, 30 patients with metastatic PCs
54 underwent first-line SSA treatment (20 with octreotide LAR 30 mg and 10 with
55 lanreotide 120 mg every 28 days). Eight (23.3%) patients had TC and 23 (76.7%) had
56 AC.

57 **Results:** Median age was 65.5 years (range 47-82). All patients (23 males and 7
58 females) were ⁶⁸Ga-DOTA-TOC-PET/CT-positive (29 patients) or Octreoscan-positive
59 (one patient). Of the 20 patients who performed ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT, 14 (70.0%) were
60 positive and 6 negative (30.0%). Median treatment duration was 10 months (range 2-
61 59). One patient achieved a partial response (3.3%) and 26 (86.6%) showed stable
62 disease. One patient interrupted SSA treatment due to symptomatic cholelithiasis. Five-
63 year survival was 53.0% (95% CI: 15.0-80.0). Median PFS (mPFS) was 11.1 months
64 (95% CI: 7.0-15.0). Negative ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT patients had an mPFS of 15.2 months
65 (95% CI: 7.6-not reached) compared to 7.0 months (95% CI: 4.0-10.1) for ¹⁸FDG-
66 PET/CT -positive patients. No differences in mPFS were found in relation to TTF1-
67 value, histological subtype, and presence of extrahepatic metastases.

68 **Conclusion** SSAs showed antitumor activity in terms of disease control rate and PFS
69 and proved safe, even in patients with poor ECOG status. ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT would appear
70 to be a prognostic factor.

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72 *Keywords:* Pulmonary carcinoids; Lung neuroendocrine tumors; Octreotide; Lanreotide;

73 Somatostatin analogs

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92 **Introduction**

93 Neuroendocrine tumors (NETs) are rare tumors arising from endocrine cells in

94 various anatomic sites of both the gastrointestinal and pulmonary systems.¹

95 Bronchopulmonary NETs represent approximately 25% of primary lung tumors and
96 20%-25% of all neuroendocrine neoplasms² and have increased in prevalence over the
97 past 30 years as a consequence of improved technological and immunohistochemical
98 diagnostic procedures.³

99 World Health Organization (WHO) 2004 criteria classify lung NETs into 4 histologic
100 variants: typical carcinoid (TC) and atypical carcinoid (AC), defined jointly as
101 pulmonary carcinoids (PCs), and poorly differentiated neuroendocrine carcinomas
102 subdivided into large cell neuroendocrine carcinoma (LCNEC) and small cell carcinoma
103 (SCLC) according to cell morphology.⁴ Although a new grading system for lung NETs
104 including Ki-67, mitotic rate and necrosis was recently proposed, further validation
105 studies are urgently needed.⁵

106 Prognosis is poor in advanced and progressive disease and there is still no standard
107 therapeutic algorithm available.^{6,7} The clinical management of advanced PCs requires a
108 multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore, very few agents have been evaluated in
109 randomized clinical trials and there are still no standard therapies for metastatic
110 diseases.⁸

111 Recent prospective clinical trials investigated the role of different therapies in
112 metastatic PCs. In the Radiant-4 trial, Yao et al. reported durable tumor control with
113 everolimus in non-functioning lung or gastrointestinal NETs.⁹ Peptide receptor
114 radionuclide therapy with ¹⁷⁷Lu-DOTATATE showed good activity in 34 consecutive
115 patients with metastatic PCs, with a mPFS of 20.1 months in patients with TC and 15.7
116 months in those with AC.¹⁰

117 Somatostatin analogs (SSAs) induce stabilization in 30-70% of patients with well
118 differentiated NETs, as demonstrated in multiple prospective and retrospective
119 studies,¹¹ and are often used as first-line treatment of metastatic lung NETs.

120 Octreotide acetate, developed as a pharmacologically stable, long-acting repeatable
121 (LAR) analog of the hormone somatostatin octreotide, has also proven to be an effective
122 agent because of its antiproliferative effect. Lanreotide is a synthetic analog of
123 somatostatin. Mimicking the actions of somatostatin, SSAs were initially for their
124 antisecretory effects.¹² In a paper by Srirajaskanthan et al., SSAs were administered to
125 7 patients with inoperable TC and to 5 with AC, both syndromic, to obtain an anti-
126 tumor effect or symptom control. Six patients receiving first-line SSA treatment showed
127 a time-to-progression (TTP) of 10.5 months.¹³ In another work, 7 AC patients with
128 liver metastases underwent SSA treatment, obtaining complete control of carcinoid
129 crisis and carcinoid syndrome, with a partial response (PR) in 2 (28.5%) patients and a
130 complete response (CR) in one (14.2%) patient.¹⁴

131 The use of SSAs is more controversial in non-functioning tumors, but in the wake of
132 the promising results from the PROMID and CLARINET trials on
133 gastroenteropancreatic (GEP-)NETs, octreotide and lanreotide are now more widely
134 used for non-functioning tumors of other origin. Conversely, clinical trials on the use of
135 SSAs in PCs are lacking.^{15,16}

136 The objective of this paper was to retrospectively evaluate the efficacy of SSAs as
137 first- line treatment of metastatic non-functioning PCs. We also aimed to identify
138 prognostic factors and to assess their potential to improve the therapeutic management
139 of these patients.

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141 **Methods**

142 *Patients*

143 Patients ≥ 18 years old were required to have histologically confirmed measurable
144 metastatic TC or AC according to the WHO 2004 classification. All patients were
145 required to have a positive ^{68}Ga -DOTA-TOC-PET/CT (29 patients) or Octreoscan
146 (one patient). All ^{68}Ga -PET/CTs were performed at our institute. Poorly differentiated
147 tumors were excluded from this analysis. The majority of patients had extrahepatic
148 disease at diagnosis. Histology referrals of patients from other institutes were reviewed
149 by our pathologist, as per our internal guidelines. Median follow-up was 40 months
150 (range 1-88 months).

151 Clinical data were retrieved from the Rare Tumor Database and the project was
152 reviewed and approved by the Medical Scientific Committee and Ethics Committee of
153 Istituto Scientifico Romagnolo per lo Studio e la Cura dei Tumori (IRST) IRCCS. All
154 patients had previously consented to treatment and had signed a consent form
155 authorizing the processing of their personal data for research purposes.

156 Staging procedures performed before the start of treatment included physical
157 examination, biochemical profile and brain-chest-abdominal CT scan or liver and brain
158 MRI and chest CT scan. Treatment was discontinued in the event of worsening clinical
159 conditions, unacceptable toxicity or disease progression. Patients were evaluated every
160 three months or if disease progression was suspected, and those without radiological
161 restaging were defined as non evaluable. Response to treatment was evaluated using
162 response evaluation criteria in solid tumor (RECIST) parameters.¹⁴ Toxicity was
163 assessed using National Cancer Institute Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse
164 Events version 4.0.

165

166 *Treatment*

167 All patients who received at least one administration of octreotide LAR or lanreotide
168 were considered eligible for the study. Lanreotide was given at a dose of 120 mg via
169 deep subcutaneous injection every 28 days. Octreotide LAR was administered at dose of
170 30 mg by deep intramuscular injection at 4-week intervals after a 15-day induction
171 period with octreotide 0.1 mg three times daily by subcutaneous injection.

172 *Statistical Analysis*

173 Categorical variables were presented as frequency and percentage, while continuous
174 variables as median and range. Overall survival (OS) was calculated from the date of
175 the start of the first-line regimen to the date of death or last contact. Progression-free
176 survival (PFS) was measured from the date of the start of the first-line regimen to the
177 date of the first documented disease progression, the date of the start of second-line
178 treatment or the date of death due to any cause, whichever came first. OS and PFS were
179 estimated by the Kaplan-Meier method and 95% confidence interval (95%CI) were
180 computed. OS and PFS were reported as median values while the proportion of patients
181 who were alive after 5 years was also shown for OS. Differences between groups were
182 analyzed using the logrank test.

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185 **Results**

186 From January 2007 to December 2015, 30 patients with metastatic PC received first-
187 line SSA treatment (20 with octreotide LAR 30 mg and 10 with lanreotide 120 mg
188 every 28 days). No prior treatments for either metastatic or localized disease were
189 permitted. Seven (23.3%) patients had TC and 23 (76.7%) had AC. The Ki67 value was
190 $\leq 5\%$ in 9 (30%) patients and between 6% and 20% in 16 (53%).

191 Median age was 65.5 years (range 47-82) and ECOG performance status at diagnosis
192 was 0 in 14 (46.7%) patients, 1 in 11 (36.7%) patients and 2 (16.6%) in 5 patients. At
193 diagnosis, 16 (53.3%) patients had undergone surgery for localized disease while 14
194 patients (46.6%) presented with locally advanced or metastatic cancer. Ninety percent
195 of patients had extrahepatic metastatic disease and 20 showed a high liver tumor burden.
196 The most common sites of metastasis were the liver and bone. All patients were ^{68}Ga -
197 PET/CT- or Octreoscan- positive. All 30 patients underwent second-line treatment, 6
198 with chemotherapy and 23 with peptide receptor radionuclide therapy (PRRT) and 12
199 (40 %) received also a third-line therapy. Patient characteristics are listed in Table 1.

200 Median treatment duration was 10.0 months (range 2.0-59.0). The minimum follow
201 up was 3 months. One patient progressed after only one month. One (3.3%) patient
202 achieved a partial response and 26 (86.6%) showed stable disease, both statuses
203 maintained for a median of 12 months. Fourteen (46.6%) patients experienced
204 steatorrhea and 8 (26.6%) had grade 1 diarrhea, treated with symptomatic drugs. One
205 (3.3%) patient interrupted SSA due to grade 3 symptomatic cholelithiasis. No deaths
206 occurred from toxicity.

207 The 5-year overall survival rate was 53.0% (95% CI: 15.0-80.9) (Fig. 1) . Median PFS
208 was 11.1 months (95% CI: 7.0-15.0) (Fig. 2). No significant differences in median PFS

209 were found in relation to age, sex, performance status, TTF1 value, Ki67 value,
210 histological subtype, liver tumor burden or presence of extrahepatic metastases
211 (Table 2). No differences in median PFS (mPFS) or 5-year OS were seen between the
212 lanreotide and octreotide groups (PFS 10.1 months vs. 11.1 months, respectively; 5-year
213 OS 87.5% vs. 65.6%) (Fig. 3).

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215 ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT evaluation

216 Of the 20 patients who performed ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT, 14 (70.0%) were positive and
217 6 negative (30.0%). Patients with negative ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT had a median PFS of 15.2
218 months (95% CI: 7.6-not reached), while those with ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT positivity had a
219 median PFS of 7.0 months (95% CI: 4.0-10.1). This difference was statistically
220 significant ($p = 0.0169$) (Fig. 4). The median ¹⁸FDG-PET maximum standardized
221 uptake value (SUVmax) was 3.5 (range 0-7.7). The mPFS was greater in patients with
222 ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT SUV max ≤ 3.5 (mPFS: 12 months, 95% CI: 1.6-25.3) than in those
223 with SUV max >3.5 (mPFS: 7 months, 95% CI: 3.0-12.9) ($p=0.0497$) (Fig. 5.) No
224 differences in terms of mOS were observed between ¹⁸FDG-PET-positive (mOS: 42
225 months) and -negative patients (mOS not reached) ($p=0.8747$)

226 Discussion

227 PCs are rare tumors with an incidence of 5-10/1,000,000 person-years and an
228 estimated 5-year OS of 61-88% for resected ACs, 90% for resected TCs and about 27%
229 (median OS of 17 months) in the metastatic setting.⁶

230 In metastatic disease, the role of cytotoxic agents, *e.g.* cisplatin, streptozocin,
231 capecitabine, dacarbazine, 5-fluorouracil, temozolomide and interferon, is unclear.¹⁷

232 Recently, everolimus, a targeted m-TOR inhibitor, showed positive results in a
233 prospective clinical trial involving patients with progressive lung NETs.⁹
234 According to recently published guidelines, SSAs can be considered for the first-line
235 systemic treatment of patients with advanced PCs with a low proliferation index and a
236 positive Octreoscan. However, these recommendations were based on the results of
237 GEP-NET clinical trials and on the safety profile of these drugs.⁸ No dedicated trials
238 have been carried out on non-secreting PCs and caution should thus be exercised in
239 administering SSAs to patients with a high tumor burden, high mitotic index or rapidly
240 progressing disease.

241 In our study, patients with non-secreting PCs had an mPFS of 11 months. Although a
242 direct comparison with the mPFS of the PROMID and CLARINET trials is not feasible,
243 we confirmed that SSAs (both octreotide and lanreotide) obtained long-term tumor
244 control and showed very few side-effects in progressive metastatic lung NETs. Our
245 results also suggest that PCs have a variable prognosis and appear to be more aggressive
246 than GEP-NETs. In our case this could be because of the high percentage of patients
247 with ACs (76.7%), which are more aggressive than TCs but also by the high number of
248 patients with extrahepatic disease and a high liver tumor burden. However, histology
249 cannot be the only factor to guide the choice of medical treatment but more clinical and
250 pathological information is needed to distinguish between patients with a good
251 prognosis and those with a bad one.

252 It is widely accepted that somatostatin receptor scintigraphy and ⁶⁸Ga-
253 DOTATATE/TOC PET/CT are useful in the diagnosis of well differentiated lung NETs
254 given that about 80% of these tumors express somatostatin receptors, with a high

255 prevalence of subtype 2.¹⁸ ¹⁸FDG PET/CT is also a helpful tool in the identification of
256 mediastinal lymph node disease in ACs.

257 In a retrospective study by Kaira et al., the amount of ¹⁸FDG uptake in early stage
258 lung NETs was determined by markers of glucose metabolism, hypoxia and
259 angiogenesis and increased in pancreatic NETs as tumor progressed from low- to high-
260 grade from low-grade to high-grade pancreatic NETs.¹⁹ In our study, patients with a
261 positive ¹⁸FDG PET/CT had a shorter PFS than those who showed ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT
262 negativity and this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.0154$). This suggests
263 that information obtained from ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT could help to identify more aggressive
264 tumors that may only marginally benefit from SSA treatment alone and could be
265 included in the treatment decision algorithm for metastatic disease.

266 Our study has a number of limitations, the most important being the small number of
267 patients evaluated due to the rarity of this subgroup of tumors. In addition, although
268 octreotide LAR and lanreotide would seem to be equally effective in controlling the
269 disease, a comparison between subgroups was not possible because of the retrospective
270 nature of the study. For the same reason, safety information may have been
271 underestimated. There was also no central review of the images, and patient follow up
272 was performed on the basis of local institutional guidelines.

273 Despite the above limitations, our findings confirm the activity and safety profile of
274 both octreotide and lanreotide in non-functioning PCs and provide valuable information
275 on the prognostic significance of ¹⁸FDG-PET/CT. These data could be taken into
276 consideration when designing prospective clinical studies on pulmonary carcinoids.
277 Prospective clinical and biological studies specifically focusing on PCs are needed to

278 better understand the natural history of these tumors, which seems to differ from that of
279 GEP-NETs, and to guide physicians in their choice of treatment.

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288 **Clinical Practice Points**

- 289 • Pulmonary carcinoids are rare tumors including different histological
290 subtypes with different clinical outcomes.
- 291 • PCs are divided in “functioning” and “not-functioning” tumors depending on
292 hormone secretion capability
- 293 • Few dedicated clinical studies are available and the clinical management of
294 PCs requires a multidisciplinary approach.
- 295 • Our study shows that SSAs improve tumor control in patients with non -
296 functioning metastatic PCs with a median PFS of 11.1 months and a 5-year
297 overall survival rate of 53.0% .
- 298 • Clinical factors including age, sex, performance status, TTF1 value,
299 histological subtype, liver tumor burden or presence of extrahepatic
300 metastasis are not correlated to mPFS

- 301 • Moreover, ¹⁸F-FDG-PET/CT could help to identify more aggressive tumors
302 and should be included in the treatment decision algorithm for metastatic
303 disease.

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315

316 **Conflict of interests**

317 The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

318

319 **Authors' contributions**

320 Alberto Bongiovanni and Toni Ibrahim conceived the idea for this study. Nada Riva,

321 Federica Pieri and Silvia Nicolini reviewed the literature and advised on the clinical

322 classification of pulmonary neuroendocrine tumors . Laura Mercatali and Chiara Liverani

323 collected the data. Flavia Foca performed the biostatistical analysis. Alberto

324 Bongiovanni, Toni Ibrahim and Federica Recine co-drafted the manuscript. Dino

325 Amadori critically reviewed the manuscript for important intellectual content. All
326 authors read and approved the final version of the paper.

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Figure legends

407 **Figure 1.** Overall survival (OS) in the entire population.

408 **Figure 2.** Progression-free survival (PFS) in the entire population.

409 **Figure. 3** PFS according to ^{18}F FDG-PET/CT scan.

410 **Figure. 4** Median PFS (mPFS) (a) and 5-year OS (b) according to the type of
411 somatostatin analog used.

412 **Figure 5.** Progression-free survival as a function of ^{18}F FDG-PET/CT SUV.

Table 1. Patient characteristics

Variable	No. (%)
Sex	
Male	23 (76.7)
Female	7 (23.3)
Median age, years (range)	65.5 (47-82)
ECOG Performance Status	
0	14 (46.7)
1	11 (36.7)
2	5 (16.6)
WHO Classification	
Typical carcinoid	7 (23.3)
Atypical carcinoid	23 (76.7)
Ki67%	
≤ 5%	9 (36%)
6-20%	16 (64%)
Unknown	5
TTF1	
Negative	12 (80.0)
Positive	3 (20.0)
Missing	15
Ga68-PET/CT or Octreoscan	
Negative	0 (0.0)
Positive	30 (100.0)
FDG-PET/CT	
Negative	6 (30.0)
Positive	14 (70.0)
Not performed	10
Somatostatin analog	
Lanreotide	10 (33.3)
Octreotide	20 (66.7)
Site of Metastasis	
Liver	27 (90.0)
Bone	22 (73.3)
Lymph node	19 (63.3)
Lung	18 (60.0)
Liver tumor burden	
One hepatic lesion	2 (7.4)
2-6	5 (18.5)
>6	20 (74.1)
Extra hepatic metastasis	
Yes	27 (90.0)
No	3 (10.0)

Variable	No. (%)
Second-line treatment	
Chemotherapy	6 (20.0)
PRRT	23 (76.7)
Other	1 (3.3)
Third-line treatment	
Chemotherapy	6 (50.0)
PRRT	4 (33.3)
Other	2 (16.7)
<i>Missing</i>	<i>18</i>

PRRT, peptide receptor radionuclide therapy

Table 2. Prognostic factors

Variables	No. patients (%)	No. events	5-year survival rate (95% CI)
Total	24	8	53 (23.7-77.1)
Pet result			
FDG-PET/CT negative	5	1	80.0 (20.4-96.9)
FDG-PET/CT positive	12	4	48.9 (7.3-82.2)
WHO Classification			
Typical carcinoid	6	3	60.0 (12.6-88.2)
Atypical carcinoid	18	5	41.2 (6.4-75.1)
TFF1			
Negative	9	1	87.5 (38.7-98.1)
Positive	3	1	-
KI67% value			
≤5%	6	2	65.6 (15.7-90.9)
6-20%	8	4	47.7 (8.6-80.0)
Somatostatin analog			
Lanreotide	9	3	87.5 (38.7-98.1)
Octreotide	15	5	65.7 (29.4-86.6)
Liver tumor burden			
One hepatic lesion	1	0	-
2-6	4	2	-
>6	16	5	72.2 (40.8-88.9)

Fig. 1

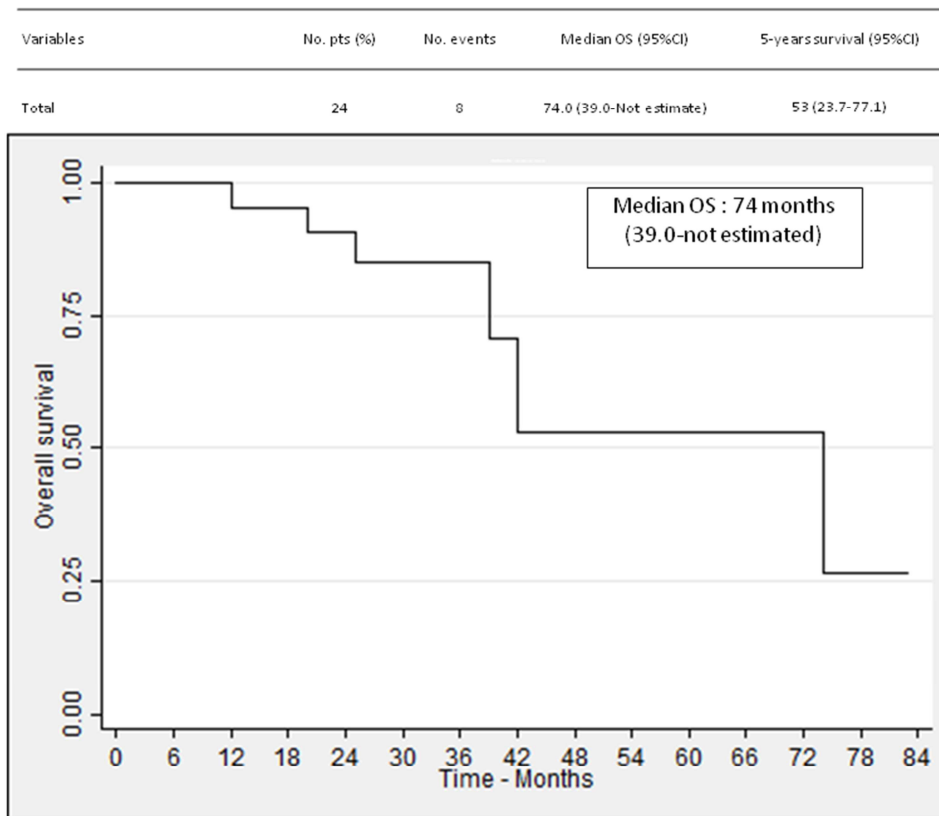


Fig. 2

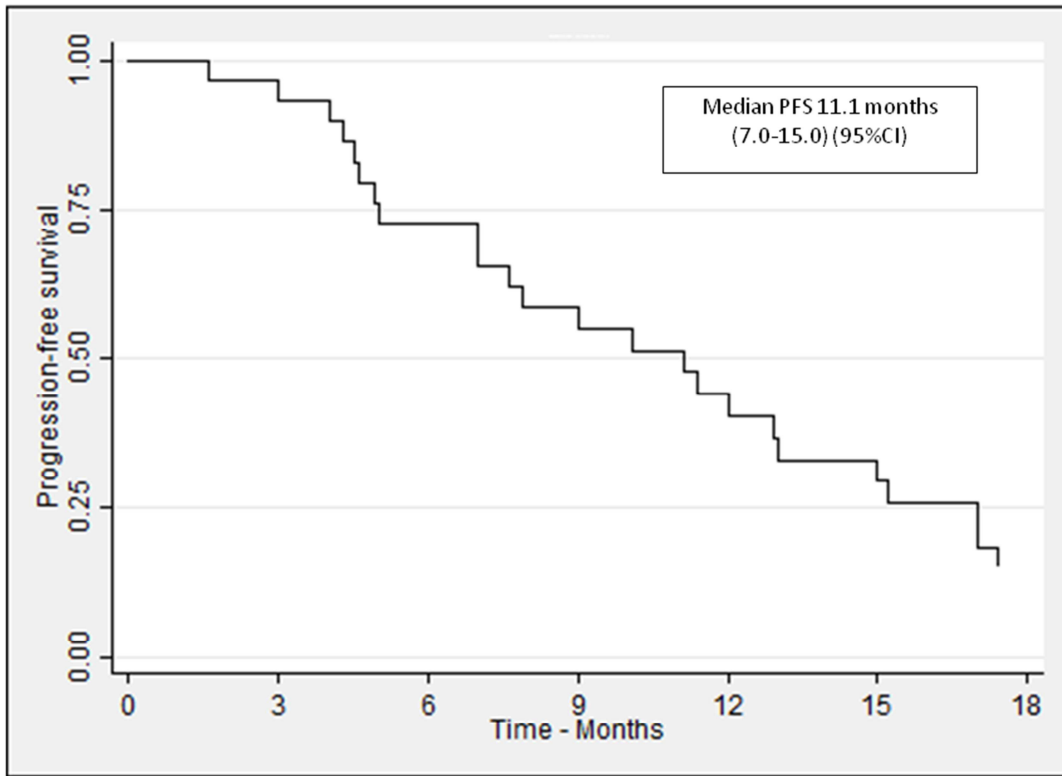


Fig. 3

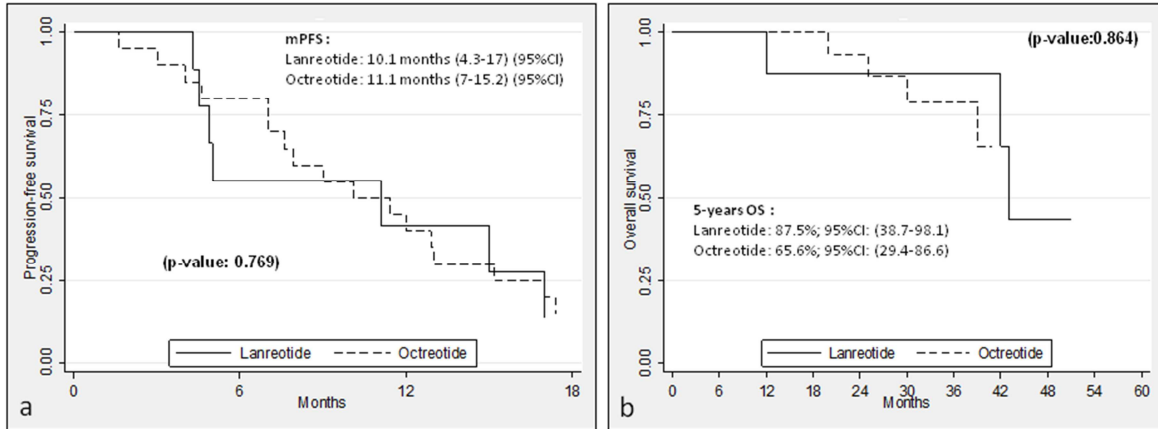


Fig. 4

