Survival of stage IV melanoma in Belgium and the Netherlands

With interest, we read the paper by Reyn et al.\(^1\) in which the authors describe striking differences in melanoma incidence and survival between Belgium and The Netherlands.\(^2\) When trying to interpret the data, we were surprised to notice that during twelve years, only 610 stage IV melanoma patients were included (i.e. 50 patients/year).

Since 2013, the nationwide Dutch Melanoma Treatment Registry (DMTR) has prospectively registered all stage IV melanoma patients treated in the Netherlands.\(^3\) In the DMTR, over 700 patients diagnosed with stage IV melanoma are registered each year,\(^4\) which means that <10% of Dutch stage IV melanoma patients were included in the analyses by Reyn et al. Furthermore, the higher relative incidence of stage IV melanoma patients in Belgium suggests a selection bias.

Altogether, we think that it is very important to discuss the selection process of stage IV melanoma patients with its potential biases and the representativeness of these patients for the whole stage IV melanoma population in the Netherlands. We recommend caution when interpreting these data and think that conclusions about differences in survival cannot be made.


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