

Spotlight

By Anne Forde

Cancer Testis Antigens and Tumor Recurrence in Stomach Cancer

Perez et al.

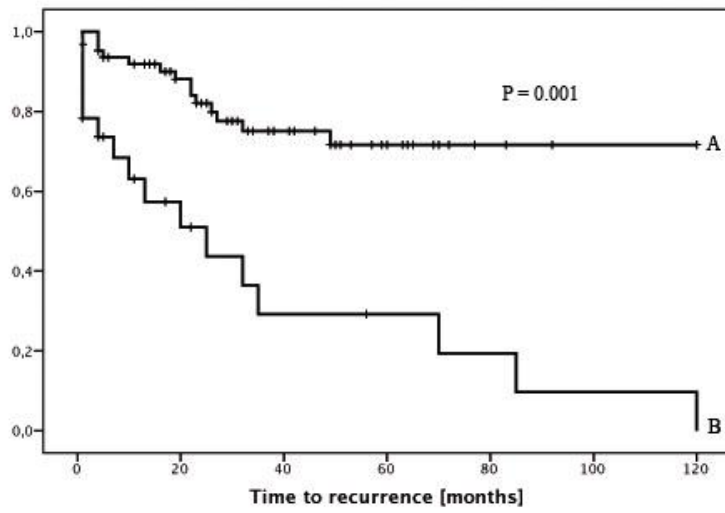
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Cancer testis antigens (CTA) are expressed in a wide variety of cancers and are associated with a poor disease outcome. Previously, the authors of this paper had observed a shorter recurrence free survival in gastrointestinal stromal tumor patients who expressed CTAs.

In this study, they look in more detail at CTA expression in 86 gastrointestinal stromal tumor patients using a panel of monoclonal antibodies against 5 common CTAs. The incidence of positive expression of CTAs varied, depending on the antigen, but a total of 27% of cases were positive for at least 1 CTA. Patients expressing CTA had significantly shorter recurrence-free survival ($p=0.001$) than CTA-negative cases.

Tumor recurrence was identified in 30 patients: almost half of these patients were positive for at least 1 CTA. All relapsed patients were treated with imatinib, an important adjuvant treatment which has been shown to repress tumors and stabilize the disease in most patients. The authors observed that tumor progression was more likely and quicker in CTA-positive patients who received imatinib than in CTA-negative ones. The median progression-free survival was only 4.8 months in CTA-positive but 39 months in CTA-negative patients. Two specific CTAs were associated with tumor progression under imatinib treatment.

This study confirms that CTA expression can be a useful prognostic marker for gastrointestinal stromal tumors and may predict tumor response to imatinib. However, the authors stress the importance of clarifying the influence of CTA expression on tumor response to imatinib.



Differing recurrence-free survival in gastrointestinal stromal tumor patients with (B) and without (A) CTA expression.