

Conversion surgery after triple combination treatment in HER2-positive unresectable gastric cancer

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The standard treatment of HER-2 positive advanced gastric cancer (AGC) is trastuzumab plus chemotherapy, but clinical outcomes are often unsatisfactory, only a small subgroup of patients achieving one-year progression-free survival. Recent clinical trials showed promising results with addition of anti-PD-1 inhibitor pembrolizumab to the standard regimen, demonstrating enhanced response and providing opportunities for conversion surgery in well-responding patients. A 64-year old woman with a past history of hypertension was diagnosed with HER2 IHC 2+, SISH+ AGC in December 2017. Multiple IHC staining for biomarkers was performed, and the tissue showed EBV negative, MSS, EGFR 1+, PTEN intact, and PD-L1 22C3 CPS 1. The initial imaging studies revealed distant lymph node metastases including perigastric and common hepatic artery lymph nodes. The patient was enrolled in the PANTHERA trial (clinicaltrials.gov identifier: NCT02901301) and received pembrolizumab plus trastuzumab, capecitabine, and cisplatin as palliative aim first-line treatment. After 7 cycles of treatment over 6 months, the primary stomach cancer was not well delineated and the metastatic lymph nodes were contracted. Objective response rate of common hepatic lymph node was -67% from baseline and TNM staging was converted to cT2N0M0. Conversion surgery was planned and the patient underwent subtotal gastrectomy with gastrojejunostomy (Billroth II) with D2 dissection on July, 2018. The pathology after surgery reported ypT1aN1 specimen with Mandard grade 2. After conversion surgery, the patient has undergone additional 27 cycles of treatment with pembrolizumab and trastuzumab until May, 2020. After completing a total of 35 cycles of treatment, the patient stays in disease-free status without additional treatment as of June 2023.

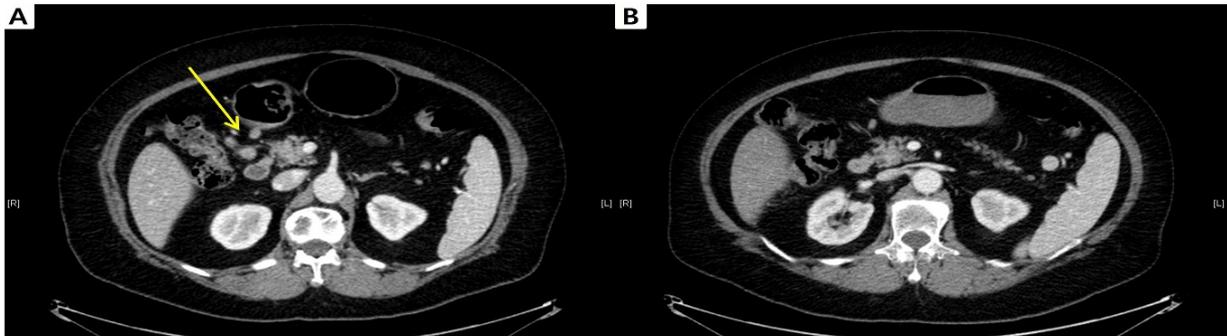


Figure 1: Comparison of the CT scans before and after 7 cycles of treatment. (A) The initial CT scan revealed multiple metastatic infrapyloric lymph nodes (Arrow). (B) After 7 cycles of treatment, a single contracted infrapyloric lymph node is found, and the other previously noted lymph nodes are not well delineated.