

Letter to the Editor

Blood Transfusion and Prognosis in Surgical Cancer Patients

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RECENTLY an article on the influence of blood transfusions on the prognosis in resected lung cancer was published in the *European Journal of Cancer and Clinical Oncology* [1]. In a comment by Foster in a subsequent issue, the effect of blood transfusions in other than only lung cancers is reviewed [2]. A prospective, randomized study to investigate the relationship between blood transfusions and survival in cancer patients is recommended. This recommendation endorses a current trial.

In 1987 the results of a detailed retrospective analysis in our institution were published, showing a 5-year cumulative overall survival of 48% in transfused and of 74% in non-transfused colon cancer patients. In breast cancer patients no effect

of blood transfusion on long-term survival was noted [3].

In order to investigate the role of transfused leucocytes in the observed difference in survival in colon cancer, we initiated in summer 1987 in the Netherlands a multicenter, prospectively randomized trial. After stratification for the participating hospital, patients with colorectal carcinoma receive, when necessary, either leucocyte-poor packed red blood cells or cotton wool filtered leucocyte-free red cells. Both disease free interval and overall survival are monitored. The study is presently open for accrual up to a total of 110 transfused patients in each arm.

The protocol is available upon request.

REFERENCES

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2. Foster RS. Blood transfusions for surgical cancer patients: more harm than good? *Eur J Cancer Clin Oncol* 1987, **23**, 1435-1437.
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