Chronic GI symptoms after upper GI cancer therapies

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The treatments for upper GI cancers

• 80% of patients – palliative and mostly non-surgical

• 20% of patients – attempted curative and mostly surgical chemotherapy

• 10% of patients – severe, persisting symptoms relating to treatment
The cancers and their symptoms

- Oesophagus - dysphagia
- Stomach - early satiety, epigastric pain, nausea and vomiting
- Pancreas - pruritus, back pain
- All – anorexia, fatigue, symptoms secondary to weight loss/anaemia
Symptoms and quality of life

Physical effects

Social effects

Emotional effects
Common upper GI symptoms after treatment

- General
  - anorexia
  - malaise
  - fatigue
  - secondary to weight loss
  - secondary to anaemia
Common upper GI symptoms after treatment

- Specific
  - oesophagus: dysphagia, reflux, aspiration, shortness of breath, ‘dumping’, diarrhoea
  - stomach: early satiety, ‘dumping’, diarrhoea, consequences of prolonged malnutrition
  - pancreas: pruritus, pain, fevers, steatorrhea
Symptoms after treatments for oesophageal cancer

- **Endoscopic recanalisation**
  - dysphagia due to recurrence
  - bleeding due to recurrence
- **Stenting**
  - dysphagia due to overgrowth, migration, bolus obstruction
  - reflux/aspiration if stent crosses O-G junction
- **Chemo/DXT**
  - dysphagia due to residual disease, recurrence, fibrosis
- **Surgery**
  - dysphagia due to anastomotic stricture/recurrence
  - reflux due to intra-thoracic stomach
Coughing after food
Coughing after food
Dyspnoea after oesophagectomy
Dyspnoea

higher score = more symptoms

- - - - - surgery
--- chemoradiation
Symptoms after treatments for gastric cancer

- Endoscopic recanalisation/stenting chemotherapy/surgical by-pass
  - obstructive symptoms, bleeding

- Resectional surgery
  - early satiety
  - dumping
  - diarrhoea
Symptoms after treatments for pancreatic cancer

• Stenting (biliary duodenal)
  - pruritus, fevers, pain, vomiting due to overgrowth, migration, blockage

• Surgical bypass/resectional surgery
  - vomiting, abdominal pain due to intestinal obstruction, pain due to recurrence, steatorrhoea
Effects of oesophageal and gastric resections

- Vagotomy (control of acid production and coordinated gastric motility)
  - reduced meal-stimulated acid output
  - delayed gastric emptying especially for solids
  - gastric incontinence
  - diarrhoea
- Loss of reservoir
Dumping and diarrhoea

- Dumping symptoms
  - post-prandial pain, abdominal heaviness, bloating, lightheadedness, nausea, colic, vasomotor symptoms
  - Early (hyperosmolar gut loading)
  - Late (hypoglycaemia)

- Diarrhoea
  - intermittent, urgency
Loss of reservoir

- Small stomach syndrome (rapid satiety, post-prandial pain)
- Risk of B12 deficiency
- Impaired food absorption
- Poor absorption of Fe/Ca
Key points

• Symptoms after treatment are often due to the cancer

• Quality of life is not always improved just by alleviating symptoms

• Repeated interventions are hazardous