Computated Tomography Guided Fine Needle Aspiration Cytology of Clinically Suspected Lung Neoplasm: An Institutional Experience in Kumaun Region of Uttarakhand

Prabhat Pant1, Vindhya Joshi2, Kailash Chandra Pandey3, Sanjeev Kumar Shukla4, Dinesh Chandra Punera5

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Lung carcinoma is the most common cause of cancer related mortality worldwide. Lung carcinoma is malignant lung neoplasm characterized by uncontrolled cell proliferation in lung tissue. Primary lung cancers are derived from epithelial cells. This present study was designed and conducted with an aim to evaluate demographics, imaging characteristics, staging of lung cancer by MDCT, cytopathological spectrum of lung cancers in Kumaun region of Uttarakhand and to assess the diagnostic accuracy of CT guided FNAC in evaluation of suspected lung masses.

Material and methods: This institution based prospective cross-sectional study was conducted at Government medical college and Swami Ram Cancer Hospital, Haldwani from 2018 to 2020 for two years. Computed tomography guided FNAC was done in 102 patients. After proper history and through clinical examination, patients were subjected to CT guided aspiration using aseptic precautions. Air-dried smears were stained with May–Grünewald–Giemsa (MGG). Alcohol fixed smears were stained using routine Papanicolaou (Pap) and Hematoxyline & Eosine (H & E) method.

Results: The study consisted of 102 patients in age group of 33-86 years. There were 81 males (79.41%) and 21 females (20.58%) and adequate sample was obtained in 94 patients giving adequacy rate of 92.15%. The most common cytopathological presentation was squamous cell carcinoma in 49 patients (52.12%) followed by adenocarcinoma in 23 patients (24.46%). Pneumothorax was seen in 24 patients (23.20%) of patients and no patient required chest tube insertion. In our study computed tomography (CT) guided FNAC was found successful in making the diagnosis in 91 cases (89.21%).

Conclusion: Computed tomography (CT) guided FNAC is a reliable, safe, less expensive, less time consuming, minimally invasive procedure with a high diagnostic accuracy for evaluation of suspected lung neoplasm.

Key word: Computed Tomography, Fine Needle Aspiration Cytology, Clinically Suspected Lung Neoplasm.

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for an estimated 9.6 million deaths in 2018. The most common cancers are Lung (2.09 million cases), Breast (2.09 million cases) & Colorectal (1.80 million cases). The most common causes of cancer death are cancers of Lung (1.76 million deaths). Tobacco use is the most important risk factor for cancer and is responsible for approximately 22% of cancer deaths. Fine-needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) is a simple, relatively safe, rapid, reliable technique for the diagnosis of lung masses, particularly with the aid of Computed Tomography (CT) scan and Ultrasound Scan. FNAC not only distinguishes between benign and malignant lesions but also helps in tumour typing of lung cancer, so initiation of specific therapy like chemotherapy or surgery is possible without unnecessary delay.

FNAC was first used by Martin and Ellis as a diagnostic tool. Leyden in 1883 and Menbriel in 1986 introduced the technique as diagnostic lung puncture for detection of malignancy and infections. Numerous literatures supported that CT-guided FNAC is an accurate and sensitive way of diagnosing malignancy of the thorax. Complications from image guided needle cytology are infrequent and generally minor, particularly when 22-gauge needles are used. Pneumothorax is the principal complication of CT-guided chest FNAC, may be decreased by minimizing the amount of aerated lung traversed. It almost always is self-limited. Whenever possible, vessels, bronchi, and bullae should be avoided to minimize haemoptysis. The needle-track seeding is a rare occurrence with incidence of about 0.01%. The present study was aimed to evaluate the demographics, imaging characteristics, staging of lung cancer by MDCT, cytopathological spectrum of lung cancers in Kumaun region.

1Assistant Professor, Department of Pathology, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, 2Ex-Assistant Professor, Department of Radiodiagnosis and Imaging, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, 3Associate Professor, Department of Radiotherapy, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, 4Research Scientist-II, Multidisciplinary Research Unit, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, 5Associate Professor, Department TB and Chest Disease, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India

How to cite this article: Prabhat Pant, Vindhya Joshi, Kailash Chandra Pandey, Sanjeev Kumar Shukla, Dinesh Chandra Punera. Computed tomography guided fine needle aspiration cytology of clinically suspected lung neoplasm: An Institutional Experience in Kumaun Region of Uttarakhnd. International Journal of Contemporary Medical Research 2020;7(6):F6-F11.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21276/ijcmr.2020.7.6.32
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**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This prospective cross-sectional study was conducted in the Department of Pathology, Radio Diagnosis & Radiation Oncology, Government Medical College & Swami Ram Cancer Hospital, Haldwani, during the period of 2018-2020 for two years. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of Govt Medical College, Haldwani. A total of 102 patients having clinically suspected lung cancers on X-ray chest & CT scan were referred from Department of Pulmonary Medicine, Government Medical College and Department of Radiation Oncology, Swami Ram Cancer Hospital, Haldwani. The chest radiograph was taken in posterior-anterior view and lateral view using Carestream DR (Digital radiography) machine. CT scan thorax was performed using Siemens Soma tom 16 slice MDCT machine & all images were acquired on 512 X 512 pixel matrix. Heterogeneous contrast enhancement of lesion, size greater than 3.0 cm, irregular margins, spiculation, surface lobulation, corona radiate, presence of necrosis, cavitation, calcification, pleural / chest wall invasion, rib or vertebral invasion, vascular invasion, presence of pleural effusion and hilar or mediastinal lymphadenopathy were considered signs of malignancy.

CT guided FNAC of pulmonary mass lesions from each case were performed by experienced cytopathologist & radiologist after explaining the risks and benefits. From each patient, informed consent was taken. The skin surface was cleaned with povidone iodine and then 21 G-88 mm long spinal needle was introduced through percutaneous or transthoracic approach localizing the exact position by CT scan after the measurement of the site and angle of entry of the needle, route of the needle, and the distance between the skin and lesion on the CT scan monitor. (9) Following placement of the needle, a CT scan slice was taken to ascertain whether the tip of the needle was within the mass. The aspirate was obtained by to and fro and rotating movements of the needle within the lesions and smears were prepared immediately from the sample. At least 8 smears were prepared for the record. Air-dried smears were stained with May Grunwald Giemsa stain, whereas alcohol-fixed smears were stained with Papanicolaou (PAP) stain and Hematoxyline & eosine (H&E) stain for cytopathological evaluation. 94 cases with adequate cell yield were included in this prospective cross-sectional study as 08 cases showed inadequate cell yield in the current study out of 102 patients underwent CT guided FNAC, 94 patients having adequate sampling material and were evaluated for clinico-radiological and cytopathological characteristics of lesions during the study period. In the present study, patients were in the age group of 33 to 86 years of age. Youngest patients encountered was 33 years and oldest was 86 years. The median age of the study population of 61 years. Majority of patients were between 51 to 70 years of age. 32 patients (31.37%) of 51-60 years and 41 patients (40.19%) of 61-70 years. 17 patients (16.66%) were more than 71 years of age.

Male patients were 81 (79.41%) and female patient were 21 (20.58%). Male to female ratio was 3.85:1.0. In the present study, out of 102 cases 79 patients (77.45%) were chronic smokers while 23 (22.54%) were non-smokers. The ratio of smokers to non-smokers 3.43:1. Among smokers out of 79 patients, 71 (89.87%) were male and 8 (10.12%) females. The ratio of male smokers to female smokers for 8.8:1. Majority of male patients 71 patients (87.65%) were smokers. Patients were classified into two groups according to size of lesion. (<2.0 cm vs ≥2.0 cm). Size of lesion in 29 patients were <2.0. cm and in 73 patients size were ≥2.0 cm. Most common lesions were observed in right side in 53 cases (51.96%) followed by left side in 46 case (45.09%), however 03 cases (2.94%) showed bilateral involvement of lung (graph-1).

Most common presentation was cough with expectoration. Out of 102 patients 73 patients (71.56%) complained of cough with expectoration, 59 patients (57.84%) complained of unexplained weight loss with loss of appetite, 58 patients (56.86%) complained of dyspnoea, 49 patients (48.03%) complained of fever, 30 patients (29.41%) complained of chest pain, 19 patients (18.62%) complained of haemoptysis, 8 patients (7.84%) complained of hoarseness of voice, 2 patients (1.96%) complained of bone pain and 2 patients (1.96%) left hemiparesis (table-1). Hilar or Mediastinal lymph node involvement was observed in the 77 patients (75.49%), Pleural and chest wall invasion

**RESULT**

Image guided (CT guided and Ultrasound guided) Lung interventions are routinely performed now a days. For the current study out of 102 patients underwent CT guided FNAC, 94 patients having adequate sampling material and were evaluated for clinico-radiological and cytopathological characteristics of lesions during the study period. In the present study, patients were in the age group of 33 to 86 years of age. Youngest patients encountered was 33 years and oldest was 86 years. The median age of the study population of 61 years. Majority of patients were between 51 to 70 years of age. 32 patients (31.37%) of 51-60 years and 41 patients (40.19%) of 61-70 years. 17 patients (16.66%) were more than 71 years of age.

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**Graph-1:** Lung involvement...
was noted in 19 patients (18.62%), adjacent rib and vertebral involvement was noted in 11 (10.78%), mediastinal invasion in 10 (9.80%) while superior vena cava syndrome seen in 4 cases (3.92%) (table-3).

Distant visceral metastasis was observed in 33 cases (32.35%). Most common organ to be involved being liver 21 cases (20.58%), followed by adrenal in 11 cases (10.78%) and bone in 9 cases (8.82%) (table-4).

Computed tomography (CT) scan signs of malignancy
In the present study computed tomography could diagnose primary bronchogenic carcinoma in 92 cases (90.19%), out of 102 cases. CT was highly sensitive in diagnosing lung malignancies compared to chest radiograph. P value is significant (P<0.05). Majority of lesions were greater than 3.0 cm and showing predominantly heterogeneous contrast enhancement in 78 cases (75.49%), irregular margins in 49 cases (48.03%), cavitation in 21 cases (20.58%) and spiculation in 47 cases (46.07%). Necrosis was noted in 39 cases (38.23%) and calcification was noted in 19 cases (18.62%). 37 patients (36.27%) presented with associated clinical manifestations.

| Characteristic                  | No (%)            |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Age (mean + SD)                | 61.35 + 9.60     |
| Sex                            |                   |
| Male                           | 81 (79.41%)       |
| Female                         | 21 (20.58%)       |
| Smoking history                |                   |
| Non-smoker                     | 23 (22.54%)       |
| Smoker                         | 79 (77.46%)       |
| Lesion size, mm (mean + SD)    | 25 + 14 (8.8 - 95.3) |
| Lesion size                    |                   |
| < 2.0 cm                       | 29                |
| ≥ 2.0 cm                       | 73                |
| Location                       |                   |
| Right Lung                     | 53 (51.96%)       |
| Right upper lobe               | 28 (27.45%)       |
| Right middle lobe              | 6 (5.88%)         |
| Right lower lobe               | 19 (18.62%)       |
| Left Lung                      | 46 (45.09%)       |
| Left upper lobe                | 26 (25.49%)       |
| Left lower lobe                | 20 (19.60%)       |
| Bilateral Lung                 | 3 (2.94%)         |
| Provisional diagnosis by CT scan |                |
| Malignant                      | 92                |
| Inflammatory / Benign          | 10                |
| Cytological diagnosis          |                   |
| Adequate samples               | 94                |
| Malignant (Primary and secondary) | 91          |
| Benign / Inflammatory          | 02                |
| Suspicious for malignancy      | 01                |

Table-1: Demographics and Lesion Characteristics (n=102).

| Clinical Manifestations          | No. of Patients | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Cough with expectoration         | 73              | 71.56%     |
| Unexplained weight loss / loss of appetite | 59 | 57.84% |
| Dyspnoea                         | 58              | 56.86%     |
| Pyrexia of unknown origin        | 49              | 48.03%     |
| Chest Pain                       | 30              | 29.41%     |
| Haemoptysis                      | 19              | 18.62%     |
| Hoarsness of Voice               | 08              | 7.84%      |
| Bone Pain                        | 02              | 1.96%      |
| Left Hemi paresis                | 02              | 1.96%      |

Table-2: Clinical Manifestations

| Site                             | No. of Patients | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Hilar / Mediastinal Lymphadenopathy | 77             | 75.49%     |
| Pleural / Chest wall invasion    | 19              | 18.62%     |
| Adjacent Rib / Vertebral involvement | 11             | 10.78%     |
| Mediastinum invasion             | 10              | 9.80%      |
| Superior Vena Cava syndrome      | 04              | 3.92%      |

Table-3: Local tumor Invasion

| Site                             | No. of patients | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Liver                            | 21              | 20.58%     |
| Adrenal                          | 11              | 10.78%     |
| Bone                             | 09              | 8.82%      |
| Brain                            | 04              | 3.92%      |
| Contralateral Lung               | 01              | 0.98%      |

Table-4: Distant Metastasis

| Cytological Types                | No. of patients (n=94) | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Squamous cell carcinoma (Including Keratinizing and Non-keratinizing) | 49 | 52.12% |
| Adenocarcinoma (Including Bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma) | 23 | 24.46% |
| Small cell carcinoma             | 10                     | 10.63%     |
| Large cell carcinoma             | 02                     | 2.12%      |
| Undifferentiated / poorly differ- entiated carcinoma | 05 | 5.31% |
| Secondary / Metastasis           | 02                     | 2.12%      |
| Granulomatous Pathology          | 01                     | 1.06%      |
| Lung Abscess                     | 01                     | 1.06%      |
| Suspicious for Malignancy        | 01                     | 1.06%      |

Table-5: Cytopathological diagnosis on FNAC

Figure-1: C.T. Scan shows heterogeneously enhancing mass with multiple areas of necrosis in lower lobe of left lung having a large area of contact with chest wall.
collapse and consolidation whereas 42 patients (41.17%) presented with pleural effusion (Figure-1). When the sample had a high cellularity, they were defined as adequate. Sample were considered inadequate when cellularity was poor due to blood stained material or necrosis as no definitive diagnosis could be given in these cases. These cases were considered as procedure failure and these cases were subjected to repeat aspirations or histopathological evaluation. These patients were excluded from the study. Adequate aspirate was obtained in total 94 patients. This constituted to about 92.15% of cases. There were 08 patients with inadequate aspirate. In the lesion size < 2.0 cm, the cell yield was comparatively low.

In this study primary neoplasm was much more common than secondary neoplasm. The most common cytological presentation was squamous cell carcinoma in 49 patients (52.12%) (Figure-2) followed by adenocarcinoma in 23 patients (24.46%), (Figure-3) small cell carcinoma in 10 patients (10.63%) (Figure-4), large cell carcinoma in 2 patients (2.12%) and undifferentiated / poorly differentiated group found in 5 patients (5.31%). 02 patients were diagnosed as metastatic neoplasm with known primary and primary was ductal carcinoma breast and chondrosarcoma of scapular bone (Figure-5). 01 patients was diagnosed as Granulomatous pathology and 01 patients was diagnosed as lung abscess. 01 patient was categorised as suspicious for malignancy due low cell yield with presence of atypical cells. We also found that the most common tumour among the males was squamous cell carcinoma whereas among the females adenocarcinoma was the commonest. The prevalence of all types of bronchogenic carcinoma were more common in the smokers. The most common tumour among the smokers was squamous cell carcinoma whereas the most common tumour among the non-smokers was a adenocarcinoma.

**DISCUSSION**

A total of 102 cases having clinical and radiological suspicious on lung cancer were underwent multidetector computed tomography examination and fine needle aspiration cytology. Computed tomography could diagnose primary bronchogenic carcinoma in 92 cases (90.19%) while 10 cases diagnosed as inflammatory pathology. Adequate aspirate was

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**Figure-2:** Keratinizing Squamous cell carcinoma Lung. Dispersed kertinizing malignant squamous cells, spindle cells and caudate cells against a background containing necrotic debris and neutrophils. (PAP)

**Figure-3:** Adenocarcinoma 'Bronchogenic': Group of palisaded columnar epithelial cells forming vague acinar pattern. (H&E)

**Figure-4:** Small cell carcinoma Lung. Dispersed atypical small cells with scant or no cytoplasm and uniform coarse granular nuclear chromatin. (PAP)

**Figure-5:** Metastatic deposit of chondrosarcoma. Clusters and tissue fragments of relatively bland cells with abundant vacuolated cytoplasm embedded in chondroid ground substance. (MGG)
obtained in 94 patients giving the adequacy rate of 92.15%. On cytology 91 cases were diagnosed as bronchogenic carcinoma, 02 case were inflammatory pathology or granulomatous etiology and 01 case as suspicious for malignancy. The sensitivity of computed tomography guided FNAC was found to be 95.60% and this correlation with computed tomography was found to be Moderate (r = 0.565). Most of the patients in our study belonged to the age group between 51-70 years with median age of 61 years, which is corresponding to other Indian studies. As compared to western population median age of our patients was a decade younger. Most of the previous studies Indian have reported the similar median age. Behara et al 2004, Prabhat Singh Malik et al 2013, Prasad et al 2004. Majority of patients were males with male: female ratio 3.85: 1. Similar sex ratio was reported by R.Prasad et al 2004, Sumandram.V. et al 2014 and Prabhat Singh Malik et al 2013 also found a male to female ratio 4:1 in their studies. Smoking was found to be most important risk factor for the lung cancer in our study. 77.45% of patients were smokers. Similar observation was made by Thippanna et al and Jindal et al. The ratio of smokers to non-smokers was 3.43:1. Smoking was significantly more common among males. In our study the ratio of male to female among smokers was 8.8:1.

Cough with expectoration with the most common complaint found in 73 patients (71.56%) of cases followed by unexplained weight loss with loss of appetite in 59 patients (57.84%), dyspnoea in 58 patients (56.86%), fever in 49 (48.03%), chest pain in 30 (29.41%), haemoptysis in 19 (16.82%) and hoarseness of voice in 8 patients (7.84%). Similar observation was reported by Jagdish Rawat et al and Manoj Kumar Agarwal et al. Comparison of this current study with other studies showed similar smear adequacy, diagnostic accuracy, sensitivity, specificity and complications as given in the table-6. There were 102 patients and adequate aspirate was obtained in 94 patients giving adequacy rate of 92.15%. Sensitivity was 95.60%, specificity was 100%, positive predictive value was 100% and negative predictive value was 33.33%. Size and depth of the lesion affects adequacy of the smears. It was comparable with other studies. Various complications can occur during the aspiration like chest pain, pneumothorax, intrapulmonary haemorrhage, haemoptysis, pulmonary embolism and rarely needle track implantation. We encountered most common complication as chest pain followed by pneumothorax in 8 cases (7.84%).

Adenocarcinoma is now the most common subtype of lung carcinoma worldwide, accounting for 40% or more of all primary carcinomas. In present study the most common cytological presentation was squamous cell carcinoma in 49 patients (52.12%) followed by adenocarcinoma in 23 patients (24.46%), small cell carcinoma in 10 patients (10.63%), large cell carcinoma in 2 patients (2.12%), undifferentiated / poorly differentiated carcinoma in 5 patients (5.31) and 02 patients were diagnosed as metastatic neoplasm. These findings are similar to studies from other part of India. Squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma and small cell carcinoma can be effectively diagnosed by cytology. In the present study majority of patients were diagnosed at a later stage of disease. The majority (72.61%) of non-small cell carcinoma (squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma, large cell carcinoma and undifferentiated / poorly differentiated carcinoma) patient had advanced stage disease stage (IIIB and IV) and 70% of small cell carcinoma patient had extensive stage disease at the time of diagnosis (IIIA,IIIB and IV). Similar observation were reported by R Prasad et al(11), Prabhat Singh Malik et al(13) and Jindal and Behara et al (14). In our study computed tomography (CT) guided FNAC was found successful in making the diagnosis in 91 cases (89.21%). The sensitivity of computed tomography guided FNAC was found to be 95.60% and this correlation with computed tomography was found to be Moderate (r = 0.565). In our study CT guided FNAC was found highly sensitive and specific in diagnosing bronchogenic carcinoma. It can sub classify the type of bronchogenic carcinoma. Hence CT guided FNAC diagnosis alone can be used with confidence to select treatment modality and to avoid unnecessary surgery in patient with lung malignancies.

**Limitation**

As non-contrast computed tomography was performed during the FNAC procedure it was sometime difficult to localize cellular / solid area in suspected lung masses with necrosis and haemorrhage thereby multiple repeat aspiration attempts. Cell yield may be low for lesions lesser than 2.0 cm in size so it can limit the diagnostic accuracy. In present study paediatric patients were excluded hence efficacy in paediatric patients could not be assessed. Although needle core biopsy and histopathology is gold standard test for evaluation of

| Name of Author | Current study | Singh JP et al. | Gupta A et al. | Gadodiya et al. | Adyakinkar et al. | Mukherjee S et al. | Emara MM et al. |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| No. of cases   | 102          | 34             | 66            | 81             | 60               | 94               | 66            |
| Age            | 35-86        | 35-75          | 9-82          | 3-80           | 10-80            | 40-70            | 9-82          |
| Adequacy       | 92.15%       | 85.3%          | 90%           | 85.55%         | 90%              | 95%              | 90%           |
| Sensitivity    | 95.60%       | 92%            | 85.7%         | 92.31%         | 90               | 97%              | -             |
| Specificity    | 100%         | 100%           | 68.9%         | 100%           | 85.7%            | 100%             | -             |
| Positive predictive value | 100%   | 100%           | 66.6%         | -              | -                | 100%             | -             |
| Negative predictive value | 33.33% | 75%            | 89.96%        | -              | -                | 66.6%            | -             |
| Pneumothorax   | 7.84%        | 11.8%          | 20%           | 3.33%          | 9.8%             | 4.3%             | 21%           |

**Table-6:** Comparison of current study with previous studies.
lung neoplasm but this is sometime difficult in government hospitals in remote areas due to limited resources.

CONCLUSION
Computed tomography (CT) guided FNAC is a reliable, safe, minimally invasive procedure with a high diagnostic accuracy for evaluation of suspected lung neoplasm and enables sub typing of bronchogenic carcinoma in the vast majority of cases. The differentiation of suspicious neoplasm in early stage of evaluation helps to categorize them in their proper subtype and avoid unnecessary treatment procedure. The pitfalls in the cytology diagnosis can be prevented by proper clinical and radiological correlations. Most common complication being pneumothorax which can be treated easily.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
I acknowledge the support of faculty members of department of Radiodiagnosis and Imaging, Tuberculosis and Chest Disease and Radiotherapy, Swami Ram cancer Hospital, Haldwani. I am thankful to technical staff for giving patient’s information and samples. I am also thankful to Principal, Government Medical College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand.

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Source of Support: Nil; Conflict of Interest: None
Submitted: 04-05-2020; Accepted: 06-06-2020; Published: 25-06-2020