Do Leukocyte and Platelet Counts have Benefit for Preoperative Evaluation of Endometrial Cancer?

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Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to investigate the association between preoperative leukocyte and platelet counts and the stage of the disease in patients with endometrial cancer. **Materials and Methods:** Data for 100 patients undergoing total abdominal hysterectomy and bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy for benign uterine diseases and 177 patients surgically staged for endometrial cancer at Ondokuz Mayis University, Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics between 2005 and 2013, with preoperative complete blood count in the week prior to surgery including WBC, platelet count, pathologic evaluation for both benign and malign endometrium lesions, tumor stage and presence of lymphovascular space invasion (LVI), were retrospectively analyzed. **Results:** The preoperative leukocyte count was significantly higher in patients with endometrial cancer when compared to the patients with benign diseases. However, there were no significant differences in platelet counts between the groups. Patients with advanced stage endometrial cancer had higher preoperative leukocyte counts when compared to the early stage disease whereas there was no difference in platelet count. Multivariate regression analysis identified preoperative leukocytosis as an independent prognostic factor for endometrial cancer. The optimal cut-off point for WBC was calculated as 10,500 to differentiate stage 1-2-3 and 4 with 88.9% sensitivity and 86.3% specificity (AUC: 0.901, 95% CI: 0.829-0.973, p<0.001, PPV: 25.8%, NPV: 99.3%). **Conclusions:** Preoperative leukocytosis is independently associated with advanced endometrial cancer.

Keywords: Endometrial cancer - leukocytosis - prognosis - stage - thrombocytosis

Materials and Methods

The study included the patients (cancer group) surgically staged for endometrial cancer according to FIGO 2009 guidelines which consisted of peritoneal cytology, total abdominal hysterectomy, bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy, systemic pelvic and para-aortic lymphadenectomy (Pecorelli, 2009), and the patients (control group) underwent total abdominal or vaginal hysterectomy for benign uterine diseases such as endometrial polip, fibroid, uterine prolapsus at Ondokuz Mayis University, Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics between 2005 and 2013.

Patients were excluded from this study if any of the following were present: incompletely staged surgery, second malignancies, hematological disease, inflammatory disease, otoimmune disease, recombinant granulocyte colony-stimulating factor use, prior chemotherapy or radiotherapy, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, nephropathy, renal or hepatic dysfunction, left ventricular dysfunction, valvular heart disease, abnormal thyroid function tests, previous history of local or systemic infection, HIV infection, any medication that is related to...
patients’ inflammatory condition such as corticosteroids and missing preoperative complete blood cell count or complete blood count drawn more than two weeks prior to surgery.

Patients’ preoperative and postoperative data, including demographic features, complete blood count in the week prior to surgery with differentials including WBC, platelet count, histopathologic evaluations for both benign and malignant endometrium lesions, grade of endometrial cancer, tumor stage, tumor size, presence of lymphovascular space invasion (LVI) and overall survival were retrospectively analyzed. Leukocytosis was defined as white blood cell count of >10,000 cells/mm3, and thrombocytosis was defined as thrombocyte count of >450 X 10^9 platelets/mm3.

Data analysis was performed by using SPSS for Windows, version 11.5. Whether the distributions of continuous and intermittent variables were normally or not was determined by Kolmogorov Smirnov test. Homogenity of variances was analyzed by Levene test.

### Table 1. Preoperative PLT and WBC Counts According to Clinico-Pathological Features of the Cancer Group

| Features                        | Pre-op PLT (x10^3/mm^3) | Pre-op WBC (cell/mm^3) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| **Grade**                       |                          |                        |
| I                               | 281 (163-732)a           | 6995 (3620-15400)a     |
| II                              | 279 (164-542)b           | 7900 (4000-16100)      |
| III                             | 327.5 (221-742)a.b       | 8830 (4000-16100)a     |
| p-value †                       | 0.023                    | 0.035                  |
| **Histology**                   |                          |                        |
| Non-endometrioid                | 293.5 (212-742)          | 8475 (4600-15270)      |
| Endometrioid                    | 283 (163-732)            | 7450 (3620-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.124                    | 0.024                  |
| **Tumor size**                  |                          |                        |
| <1 cm                           | 283.5 (163-742)          | 7710 (3620-16100)      |
| 1-2 cm                          | 296 (274-385)            | 8760 (5140-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.313                    | 0.525                  |
| **Myometrial invasion**         |                          |                        |
| <50%                            | 278 (163-732)            | 7300 (3620-14940)      |
| >50%                            | 296 (165-742)            | 8250 (4000-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.161                    | 0.099                  |
| **Cervical involvement**        |                          |                        |
| Negative                        | 280 (163-732)            | 7500 (3620-16100)      |
| Positive                        | 304.5 (179-742)          | 8000 (4620-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.013                    | 0.091                  |
| **Adnexal involvement**         |                          |                        |
| Negative                        | 281 (163-732)            | 7480 (3620-16100)      |
| Positive                        | 349 (177-742)            | 10700 (6060-16100)     |
| p-value †                       | 0.053                    | <0.001                 |
| **Peritoneal cytology**         |                          |                        |
| Nondiagnostic                   | 276.5 (163-625)          | 7500 (3810-16100)      |
| Negative                        | 203.5 (164-732)          | 7785 (3620-14940)      |
| Positive                        | 317 (217-742)            | 8760 (6350-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.078                    | 0.067                  |
| **Lymphovascular invasion**     |                          |                        |
| Negative                        | 279 (163-732)            | 7415 (3620-15400)      |
| Positive                        | 311 (188-742)            | 9180 (5130-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.003                    | <0.001                 |
| **Pelvic lymph node metastasis**|                          |                        |
| Negative                        | 282 (163-732)            | 7460 (3620-16100)      |
| Positive                        | 314.5 (211-742)          | 9260 (4620-16100)      |
| p-value †                       | 0.039                    | 0.003                  |
| **Paraortic lymph node metastasis** |                |                        |
| Negative                        | 283 (163-732)            | 7500 (3620-15410)      |
| Positive                        | 306 (188-742)            | 10245 (4600-16100)     |
| p-value †                       | 0.176                    | 0.003                  |
| **Stage**                       |                          |                        |
| I                               | 280 (163-732)            | 7415 (3620-15410)a.b   |
| II                              | 286.5 (179-434)          | 7195 (4620-14200)c.d   |
| III                             | 306 (177-542)            | 8945 (4600-16100)a.c.e |
| IV                              | 355 (268-742)            | 11100 (8540-16100)b.d.e|
| p-value †                       | 0.067                    | <0.001                 |

*Kruskal Wallis test. † Mann Whitney U test. a: Significant difference between Grade I and Grade III (p=0.009). b: Significant difference between Grade II and Grade III (p=0.005); ‡Kruskal Wallis test. † Mann Whitney U test. a: Significant difference between stage I and III (p=0.006). b: Significant difference between stage I and IV (p<0.001). c: Significant difference between stage II and III (p=0.008). d: Significant difference between stage II and IV (p<0.001). e: Significant difference between stage III and IV (p=0.017).
The study included 177 patients diagnosed with endometrial cancer and underwent surgical staging, and 100 patients with hysterectomy and bilateral salpingooophorectomy for benign gynecological indications. The mean age of the patients with endometrial cancer was 59.6±10.8. A hundred and forty five (81.9%) of the endometrial cancers was endometrioid type, 32 (18.1%) of them were non-endometrioid. Eighty eight (49.7%) of the cancer cases was classified as grade I, 67 (37.9%) of them was grade II, and the rest of 22 (12.4%) was grade III. When myometrial invasion was evaluated, it was <50% in 94 (53.1%) patients and >50% in 83 (46.9%) of cases. Cervical involvement was present in 42 cases (23.7%) whereas adnexal involvement was in only 17 patients (9.6%). Peritoneal cytology was positive in only 13 (7.3%) patients while negative in 84 (47.5%) cases and nondiagnostic in 80 (45.2%) cases. Lymphovascular invasion was detected in 29 (16.4%) patients. Pelvic lymph node metastasis was present in 22 (12.4%) cases while paraaortic metastasis was present in 16 (9%) patients. When stage of endometrial cancers was determined, there were 118 (66.7%) patients with stage I, 24 (13.6%) cases with stage II, 26 (14.7%) patients with stage III and only nine (5.1%) cases with advanced stage IV.

When clinicopathologic features were compared between two groups, preoperative leukocyte count was significantly higher in patients with endometrial cancer (preoperative WBC count in cancer group: 8100±2668 cell/mm³, in control group: 7039±1474 cell/mm³, p<0.001), while there was no significant difference in preoperative platelet count between the groups; preoperative PLT count in cancer group: 302±91x10³/mm³, in control group: 295±75x10³/mm³, p=0.05).

When patients’ clinicopathologic features were evaluated in terms of correlation with preoperative mean leukocyte and platelet counts; mean leukocyte count was significantly higher in the presence of grade 3 disease, non-endometrioid histology, adnexal involvement, lymphovascular invasion, pelvic and paraaortic metastasis and advanced stage (p<0.05) (Table 1). ROC analyses revealed significant area under curve for WBC count in differentiation of increased grade, adnexal involvement, positive peritoneal cytology, lymphovascular invasion, pelvic and paraaortic lymph node metastasis and advanced stage (Table 2). The optimal cut-off points were calculated for preoperative WBC count to discriminate the clinical features of endometrial cancer cases (Table 3). It was found as 6915 to differentiate stage I and advanced stages.

**Table 2. ROC Analyses for pre-op WBC to Differentiate Clinico-Pathological Features of Endometrial Cancers**

| Features                        | AUC    | 95% Confidence interval | p-value |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|---------|
| Grade 1 vs 2-3                  | 0.592  | 0.508-0.676              | 0.034   |
| Grade 1-2 vs 3                  | 0.643  | 0.512-0.774              | 0.030   |
| Histology                       | 0.628  | 0.534-0.722              | 0.024   |
| Tumor size                      | 0.571  | 0.319-0.823              | NS      |
| Myometrial invasion             | 0.572  | 0.487-0.657              | NS      |
| Cervical involvement            | 0.587  | 0.488-0.685              | NS      |
| Adnexal involvement             | 0.773  | 0.664-0.882              | <0.001  |
| Positive peritoneal cytology    | 0.690  | 0.545-0.835              | 0.028   |
| Lymphovascular invasion         | 0.711  | 0.608-0.814              | <0.001  |
| Pelvic lymph node metastasis    | 0.694  | 0.565-0.822              | 0.003   |
| Paraaortic lymph node metastasis| 0.727  | 0.581-0.873              | 0.003   |
| Stage 1 vs 2-3-4                | 0.620  | 0.530-0.710              | 0.009   |
| Stage 1-2 vs 3-4                | 0.739  | 0.641-0.837              | <0.001  |
| Stage 1-2-3 vs 4                | 0.901  | 0.829-0.973              | <0.001  |

*AUC: Area under curve*
with 72.9% sensitivity and 48.3% specificity (AUC: 0.620, 95% CI: 0.530-0.710, p=0.009, PPV: 41.3%, NPV: 78.1%), the optimal cut-off point for WBC was calculated as 8475 to differentiate stage 1-2 and 3-4 with 71.4% sensitivity and 69% specificity (AUC: 0.739, 95% CI: 0.641-0.837, p<0.001, PPV: 36.2%, NPV: 90.7%) (Table 3). In addition, the optimal cut-off point for WBC was calculated as 10500 to differentiate stage 1-2-3 and 4 with 88.9% sensitivity and 86.3% specificity (AUC: 0.901, 95% CI: 0.829-0.973, p<0.001, PPV: 25.8%, NPV: 99.3%).

Platelet count was found to be significantly increased in the presence of grade 3 disease, cervical involvement, lymphovascular invasion and pelvic lymph node metastasis (p<0.05). There was no significant association between preoperative platelet counts and stage of endometrial cancer (Table 1).

When most definitive risk factors in differentiation of advanced stages (stage II,III and IV), only myometrial invasion was identified as an independent risk factor in discrimination of stage II from stage I (p<0.001). Increased histopathologic grade (grade 3), myometrial invasion and pre-op WBC count >10500 (cell/mm³) were found to be independent risk factors in discrimination of stage III from stage I (p=0.026, p=0.019, p=0.029). Endometrioid histology and pre-op WBC count >10500 (cell/mm³) were identified as independent risk factors in discrimination of stage IV from stage I (p=0.041) (Table 4).

Table 3. Optimal Cut-Off Points for Pre-op WBC Counts to Differentiate the Clinico-Pathological Features of Endometrial Cancer Cases

| Features                          | Cut-off | Sensitivity | Specificity | PPV   | NPV   |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Grade 1 vs 2-3                   | >7785   | 60.7%       | 61.4%       | 61.4% | 60.7% |
| Grade 1-2 vs 3                   | >8020   | 72.7%       | 58.7%       | 20.0% | 93.8% |
| Histology                        | <6665   | 38.6%       | 90.6%       | 94.9% | 24.1% |
| Adnexal involvement              | >8475   | 82.4%       | 65.6%       | 20.3% | 97.2% |
| Positive peritoneal cytology      | >6345   | 100.0%      | 32.1%       | 18.6% | 100.0%|
| Lymphovascular invasion          | >8390   | 72.4%       | 66.2%       | 29.6% | 92.5% |
| Pelvic lymph node metastasis     | >8475   | 68.2%       | 65.2%       | 21.7% | 93.5% |
| Paraortic lymph node metastasis  | >8475   | 75.0%       | 64.6%       | 17.4% | 96.3% |
| Stage 1 vs 2-3-4                 | >6915   | 72.9%       | 48.3%       | 41.3% | 78.1% |
| Stage 1-2 vs 3-4                 | >8475   | 71.4%       | 69.0%       | 36.2% | 90.7% |
| Stage 1-2-3 vs 4                  | >10500   | 88.9%       | 86.3%       | 25.8% | 99.3% |

PPV: Positive predictive value, NPV: Negative predictive value

Table 4. Determination of the Most Definitive Risk Factors Including Pre-op WBC Count in Discrimination of Stage I Endometrium Cancer from Stage II, III and IV in Order According to Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis

| Stage   | Odds ratio | 95% Confidence interval | Wald | p-value |
|---------|------------|-------------------------|------|---------|
| Stage II|            |                         |      |         |
| Grade 2 | 2.114      | 0.789                   | 5.666| 2.215   | 0.137 |
| Grade 3 | 1.724      | 0.260                   | 11.416| 0.319  | 0.572 |
| Endometrioid | 1.478   | 0.387                   | 5.637| 0.327  | 0.567 |
| Myometrial invasion | 5.545 | 1.940                   | 15.853| 10.216| <0.001|
| Lymphovascular invasion | 1.363 | 0.315                   | 5.903| 0.171  | 0.679 |
| Pre-op WBC >10500          | 0.355      | 0.041                   | 3.031| 0.897  | 0.344 |
| Stage III|            |                         |      |         |
| Grade 2 | 2.761      | 0.916                   | 8.324| 3.254  | 0.071 |
| Grade 3 | 6.010      | 1.236                   | 29.232| 4.939  | 0.026 |
| Endometrioid | 3.210  | 0.955                   | 10.789| 3.555  | 0.059 |
| Myometrial invasion | 3.707  | 1.245                   | 11.036| 5.514  | 0.019 |
| Lymphovascular invasion | 2.510 | 0.565                   | 7.966| 1.763  | 0.184 |
| Pre-op WBC >10500          | 3.918      | 1.150                   | 13.352| 4.767  | 0.029 |
| Stage IV|            |                         |      |         |
| Grade 2 | 1.496      | 0.040                   | 56.440| 0.047  | 0.828 |
| Grade 3 | 42.940    | 0.9999                  | 1.844,004| 3.841 | 0.050 |
| Endometrioid | 19.950 | 1.135                   | 350.663| 4.188  | 0.041 |
| Myometrial invasion | 1.149  | 0.044                   | 29.831| 0.007  | 0.933 |
| Lymphovascular invasion | 9.723  | 0.327                   | 288.805| 1.728  | 0.189 |
| Pre-op WBC >10500          | 228,499   | 5.679                   | 9,194,156| 8,302 | 0.004 |

Discussion

Preoperative hematological alterations such as anemia, leukocytosis and thrombocytosis have been associated with poor prognosis in different malignancies (Hefler et al., 2000; Pedersen and Milman., 2003; Chen et al., 2005; Brockmann et al., 2007; Lu et al., 2007). Although the exact mechanism remains unclear, studies suggested that
tumors can affect hematologic parameters by significant tumor bleed, infiltrating the bone marrow or by producing proinflammatory cytokines (Weiss and Goodnough, 2005). Prognostic value of these parameters have been recently investigated in gynecological malignancies and findings have shed new light to such mechanisms. Pretreatment leukocytosis was associated with advanced disease in cervical cancer when compared to patients without leukocytosis (Garcia-Arias et al., 2007; Mabuchi et al., 2011). Up-regulation of hematopoietic growth factors, such as G-CSF, GM-CSF, IL-1, IL-6 and TNF-alpha were suggested to play a critical role in tumor-related leukocytosis (Sato et al., 1987; Chen et al., 1995; Watanabe et al., 1998; Mabuchi et al., 2011). G-CSF, which was suspected to be the most influential, was found significantly elevated in cervical cancer patients with pretreatment leukocytosis (Mabuchi et al., 2011). Not only in cervical cancer, but also in ovarian cancer, preoperative leukocytosis has been recently associated with poor prognosis (So et al., 2014).

With respect to endometrial cancer, when factors such as stage, histopathologic type, lymphovascular invasion, myometrial invasion and lymph node metastasis, affecting prognosis of the disease were evaluated with multivariate analysis, studies demonstrated preoperative leukocytosis as an independent risk factor for malignant endometrial lesions, advanced stage endometrial cancer and decreased survival (Worley et al., 2012; Luomaranta et al., 2013; Worley et al., 2013; Acmaz et al., 2014). In the present study, preoperative leukocytosis was found to be significantly associated with increased grade, non-endometrioid histology, cervical involvement, positive peritoneal cytology, lymphovascular invasion, pelvic and paraaortic lymph node metastasis and advanced stage (Table 2). Furthermore, optimal cut-off for pre-op WBC level was determined to differentiate advanced stage disease (Table 3).

Thrombocytosis, which is an other prevalent hematological alteration, has been estimated to occur in about 10%-57% of all patients diagnosed with malignant disease (Sierko and Wojtukiewicz, 2004). Since the responsible mechanism for thrombocytosis in malignancy is poorly understood, some factors are accepted as contributors to this process. One of them is production of cytokines such as IL-6 and IL-1 and stimulation of megakaryocytes and their precursors (Burstein and Harker, 1983; Blay et al., 1992). An other one is that elevated platelets may enhance the aggressive behaviour of tumor and shield it from immune system detection. In addition, platelets may promote angiogenesis through some platelet-derived factors such as vascular growth factor, thrombospondin and endostatin (Karpatkin S, Pearlstein, 1981; Verheul and Pinedo, 1998). Recently, studies have investigated the relationship between thrombocytosis and gynecological cancers (Hernandez et al., 1992; Heffer et al., 2000; Lerner et al., 2007; Gorelick et al., 2009). With respect to endometrial cancer, although preoperative elevated platelet count was associated with poor differentiation in grade, advanced stage, lymph node metastasis, adnexal and cervical involvement in, thrombocytosis was not found an independent prognostic factor in the multivariate studies (Gucer et al., 1998; Ayhan et al., 2006; Metindir and Bilir, 2009; Heng and Benjapibal, 2014). In contrast, there have been studies reporting preoperative thrombocytosis as an independent prognostic factor in endometrial cancer (Scholz et al., 2000; Tamussino et al., 2001; Gorelick et al., 2009). In this study, there was no significant difference in preoperative platelet count between the patients with endometrial cancer and the control group.

Despite the studies aimed to determine whether or not preoperative leukocytosis and thrombocytosis are independent risk factors on the stage of endometrial cancer, the topic has been controversial. In the present study, pre-op WBC count >10500 (cell/mm³) were found to be independent risk factors in discrimination of stage III from stage I (p=0.026, p=0.019, p=0.029) and stage IV from stage I (p=0.041) (Table 4). However, thrombocytosis was not determined as an independent risk factor on the stage of the disease.

The current study has some limitations inherit to its retrospective design. First, surgical procedures were not standardized with respect to lymphadenectomy. Second, overall and disease free survival were not reported due to the lack of communication with the patients.

In conclusion, preoperative leukocytosis (WBC >10500 cell/mm³) was independently associated with advanced endometrial cancer. More detailed studies could help to clarify the exact mechanism behind pretreatment leukocytosis and the impact of it on clinical outcomes.

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