Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy for Low and Intermediate Risk Prostate Cancer—Results from a Multi-Institutional Clinical Trial

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Supported by a Clinical Trial Award from the US Department of Defense (Grant No. PC061629; R.T., Principal Investigator).

Registered at Clinicaltrials.gov study number NCT00547339

Background:

We report the outcome of a Phase I/II clinical trial of stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) for low and select intermediate risk prostate cancer patients.

Patients and Methods:

Eligible patients included men with prostate adenocarcinoma with Gleason score 6 with PSA $\leq$ 20 or Gleason 7 with PSA $\leq$ 15 and clinical stage $\leq$ T2b. For the phase I portion of the study patients in cohorts of 15 received 45, 47.5, or 50 Gray (Gy) in 5 fractions. Since the MTD was not met in the phase I study, an additional 47 patients received 50 Gy in 5 fractions in the phase II study. Toxicity using CTCAE V3.0, quality of life, and outcome data were collected.

Results:

A total of 91 patients are included for analysis; 63.7% had NCCN intermediate- and 36.3% had low-risk PCa. At a median follow up of 54 months the actuarial FFBF was 100% at 3 years and 98.6% at 5 years. Actuarial DMFS was 100% at 3 and 5 years. OS was 94% at 3 years and 89.7% at 5 years with no deaths attributed to PCa. Acute and late urinary grade $\geq$ 3 toxicity occurred in 0% and 5.5% of patients, respectively. Gastrointestinal acute and late toxicity of grade $\geq$ 3 occurred in 2% and 7% of patients, respectively. A total of 4 men experienced grade 4 toxicity (3 GI, 1 GU).

Conclusion:

SBRT treatment results in excellent biochemical control rates at five years for low and intermediate-risk prostate cancer patients although doses greater than 47.5 Gy in 5 fractions led to increased severe late toxicity.

Introduction

Radiation therapy for organ-confined prostate cancer (PCa) involves protracted courses of external beam radiation delivered over multiple weeks daily. Several groups have attempted to reduce the course of treatment through hypofractionation. Lloyd-Davies and colleagues reported 22-year results with acceptable toxicity [1], although the study was performed in the pre-PSA and pre-CT scan era, and many patients had high-risk features. Recent hypofractionation studies have used stereotactic body radiation (SBRT) treatments ranging from 33.5Gy to 36.25Gy in five fractions [2, 3]. These studies reported acceptable toxicity with limited follow-up. Dose selection for these studies was based on a mathematical model, the Linear-Quadratic equation, which correlates in vitro cellular events to biologic outcomes using two major parameters, “alpha” and “beta”. More recently, however, it has been shown the true alpha and beta of prostate cancer is lower than previously thought [4-6]. Several studies have suggested a benefit of hypofractionation in the treatment of PCa [4]. Moreover, the Linear-Quadratic equation may overestimate the biological effects of highly hypofractionated regimens, and doses of 33.5-36.25 maybe inadequate for PCa [7, 8]. Therefore, a traditional dose-escalation trial was designed to determine the maximally tolerated dose (MTD) of SBRT in this setting.

Our group initially explored the rationale for SBRT in animal models, showing dose responses in clinically relevant ranges [9]. Considering previous brachytherapy trials indicating acceptable toxicity with doses as high as 9.5Gy per fraction in 4 fractions [10, 11], we initiated a multi-center prospective phase I/II clinical trial of dose escalated SBRT for NCCN low (LR) and intermediate risk (IR) PCa using 45Gy in 5 fractions. We determined and evaluated the MTD of SBRT for PCa treatment. We have

previously reported a phase I dose escalation toxicity study [12] and, more recently discussed rectal SBRT dose constraints [13]. The current article reports our five-year PCa control study and an update on toxicity outcomes.

Materials and Methods

Patients and Eligibility

Patients were enrolled on a multi-institutional IRB approved Phase I/II dose escalation trial between 2006 and 2011. The phase I study was open to three sites, while two additional sites were later added to phase II. Inclusion criteria were previously reported, although immunosuppressed patients were excluded from the phase II study [12]. Hormonal therapy (ADT) was allowed for up to nine months prior to SBRT to downsize the prostate gland, concurrent ADT was not allowed. Computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was performed to ensure absence of regional metastases.

Treatment Planning and Delivery

Treatment planning, dose constraints, simulation, setup, and treatment delivery parameters were previously reported [12, 13]. Briefly, the prostate was expanded uniformly by 3 mm to create the planning target volume (PTV). The dose was prescribed to cover $\geq 95\%$ of the PTV. Tissue heterogeneity correction was used in all cases.

The anterior wall was allowed to receive no more than 105% of the prescription dose. No more than 3 cm³ of the lateral walls were allowed to receive 90% of the

prescription dose. The posterior rectal wall maximum dose was limited to $\leq 45\%$ of the prescription dose. The bladder wall (outer 5 mm of the entire bladder contour) was limited to 105% of the prescription dose with no more than 10 cm³ receiving 18.3 Gy or greater. The maximum prostatic urethra dose was limited to $\leq 105\%$ of the prescription dose. Patients were instructed take 4 mg of dexamethasone prior to each treatment and α -blocker (ie tamsulosin) was given for six weeks at the start of treatment.

Toxicity Assessments

Toxicity was defined using the NCI Common Toxicity Criteria for Adverse Events (CTCAE) v. 3.0. Acute and delayed toxicities were defined before trial activation as follows: 1) toxicity occurring less than 270 days from treatment and 2) persistent or new toxicities greater than or equal to 270 days after treatment, respectively. American Urological Association Symptom Score (AUASS) and Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite (EPIC) bowel, urinary, hormonal, and sexual scores were measured at each follow up and documented for a total of 18 months after treatment, through quality of life (QOL) questionnaires. After 18 months, urinary function, rectal function, and sexual function data were documented without questionnaires.

Study Endpoints

The design and endpoints of the phase I study were previously reported [12]. The primary endpoint of the phase II study was to determine late GI/GU treatment side effects, while secondary endpoints included biochemical control, disease specific

survival, and overall survival. Since the MTD was not reached in phase I, the phase II portion was started at 50Gy in 5 fractions and designed to enroll 45 patients.

The phase II component was designed to test whether late GU/GI toxicity at 270-540 days from the start of treatment following the protocol treatment is above 10%. The sample size was determined such that the probability of rejecting the treatment because of excessive late toxicity is 90% if the true late toxicity rate is 23% or higher. Assuming an exponential distribution for time from the end of the acute period to the occurrence of late toxicity, the hazard rate for the expected 10% toxicity rate and the unacceptable 23% toxicity rate is 0.006/month and 0.015/month, respectively. Following the asymptotic property of the observed hazard and using Z-test for the logarithm of the hazard ratio, we require 12 cases with severe late GU/GI toxicity. Thus, 47 patients were required to have a statistical power of 90% with a one-sided significance level of 0.05.

PSA measurement, history, and physical examination were conducted in patients every three months for year one, every six months for years two and three, and yearly starting at four years after treatment. The ASTRO-Phoenix failure definition was used for biochemical control [14]. The Kaplan-Meier method was used to estimate freedom from biochemical failure (FFBF), distant metastasis free survival (DMFS), and overall survival (OS). Intergroup comparisons for QOL data were performed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's correction or mixed-model ANOVAs.

Results

A total of 47 patients were recruited to the phase I study, although two withdrew consent before treatment. An additional patient had Gleason 9 disease upon pathology review and was excluded from the analysis. The phase II portion included 47 additional patients for a total of 91 analyzable patients. Demographic information is summarized in Table 1.

Biochemical Outcomes

For the phase I study, the median follow up was 74 months, 72 months, and 66 months for the 45Gy, 47.5Gy, and 50Gy arms, respectively. For the phase II study the median follow up was 47.5 months with a pooled total of 54 months (range 1- 90 months). Of note, a total of 15 patients (16.5%) received ADT for downsizing the prostate (table 1). The median pre-treatment PSA for the entire cohort was 5.4 (range 0.73-16.2). Following SBRT, PSA gradually decreased with a median nadir of 0.125 at 42 months, as showed by normalized PSA kinetics (Figure 1). Six weeks after treatment, the median PSA value for all patients was 2.19 (2.19 without ADT, 2.09 with ADT), indicating a 60% reduction. There was no difference in PSA kinetics noted between treatment cohorts. PSA bounce was noted in 19 (18.4%) patients [15]; PSA bounce was detected in 17 patients after 12 months from treatment, while the remainder exhibited it at 18 months. Four bounces occurred in the 45 Gy group, 2 in the 47.5 Gy group, and the remainder in the 50 Gy group.

FFBF was 100% for all patients at three years (Figure 2). Actuarial FFBF was 98.6% for the entire cohort, 90.9% for the 45Gy group with one failure, and 100% for the 47.5Gy and 50Gy cohorts at five years (Figure 2). When parsed by the NCCN risk group, FFBF rates were 100% for LR patients (n=33) and 98% for IR patients (n=58) at

five years. Using the older three-successive-rises method of biochemical failure, the FFBF remained unchanged [16].

Survival

The actuarial overall survival rates for the 45 Gy, 47.5 Gy, and 50 Gy arms of the phase I study were 79%, 85%, and 92%, respectively, at three years. The three-year overall survival for the phase II study was 100% and for the entire cohort was 94%. Actuarial overall survival rates for the 45Gy, 47.5Gy, and 50Gy arms of the phase I study were 71.5%, 85%, and 92%, respectively, at five years. The overall survival for phase II patients was 98% at five years, and the five-year overall survival for all patients was 89.7%. PCa-specific survival was 100% for all cohorts as none of the deaths were attributed to PCa-related illness. The actuarial metastases-free survival rate for all patients was also 100% at three and five years.

Toxicity

Acute and late toxicities are reported in Table 2. No acute grade 3 or higher GU toxicities were noted. Late grade 3 GU toxicity consisting of grade 3 cystitis was noted in 4.4% of patients. A single late grade 4 urinary toxicity consisting of cystitis requiring ureteroileal diversion was observed. Actuarial toxicity for late grade ≥ 3 GU toxicity at 5 years for all patients is 6% (Figure 3). Grade 3 or higher acute GI toxicity was detected in 2% of patients. One patient experienced rectal pain requiring diverting colostomy; toxicity occurred 212 days after treatment and continued into the late period counting as both acute and late toxicity. Another patient was admitted for rectal bleeding and

diagnosed with Dieulafoy's lesion on the posterior wall of the rectum. It was unclear whether this was related to radiation treatment or a solitary ulcer from rectal prolapse. Collectively, grade 3 or greater late GI toxicity was observed in 6.8% of patients (Figure 3). Only one grade 4 GI toxicity, requiring ICU admission for rectal bleeding, was observed out of the 15 patients treated in the phase I 50Gy arm. Actuarial late grade ≥ 3 toxicity at 5 years is estimated at 8% (Figure 3). Grade 2 or higher erectile dysfunction (ED) was reported in 25.6% of men with potency before treatment at 55 months follow up; median time to onset was 296 days. Grade 3 ED was only detected in two men.

Quality of Life

QOL data was assessed using the AUASS and EPIC bowel, urinary, hormonal, and sexual function scoring systems. Patient compliance with EPIC and AUASS questionnaires was initially greater than 90%, but decreased significantly by 18 months after treatment. Repeated measures mixed-model ANOVAs were performed to account for data loss, revealing a significant decrease in all four EPIC domains and AUASS over time. Intergroup comparisons were also performed at each time point; no differences were noted among dose levels for the EPIC domain or AUASS (Figure 4A-D).

Discussion

SBRT has become increasingly common to treat men with PCa despite the lack of long-term follow up prospective trials demonstrating its efficacy. We report five-year results of a phase I/II prospective study of SBRT in men with LR and IR PCa.

We found a 3-year actuarial FFBF of 100% with a median follow up of 54 months for the entire cohort (Figure 2) by either using the ASTRO Phoenix definition or the older

three-successive-rises method [16]. We acknowledge that 5 year efficacy outcomes may be overestimated by our short follow up, but report a 98.6% FFBF. OS was lower than anticipated in the 45 Gy cohort but none of the deaths were attributable to treatment or PCa. Likely the low OS is related to chance and the older age of the treatment cohorts. The majority (64%) of the patients enrolled in this study were found to have IR PCa with 100% and 98% 3 and 5 year FFBF rates. It is important to note that percent core positivity was not recorded and not all intermediate risk patients were enrolled in this trial; many of these patients may have been considered favorable intermediate risk, but 16% of patients were Gleason 4+3. Only 14 (24%) of IR patients received a short course of ADT prior for prostate volume reduction. This outcome was favorable even in conventionally fractionated radiation therapy treated-patients who received a short course of ADT [17, 18]. Prospective randomized trials are needed to assess if single modality SBRT treatment provides sufficient control for intermediate-risk patients.

The patient who experienced biochemical recurrence had Gleason 4+3, an initial PSA of 7.4, was staged clinically as T2b, and treated in the lowest dose arm. He presented a biopsy-confirmed internal iliac node with prostate adenocarcinoma. A prostate biopsy revealed two microscopic foci of a questionably viable tumor 3.4 years after treatment. Several studies have reported no improvement in outcomes with longer follow up in intermediate-risk PCa patients previously treated with SBRT doses lower than 40Gy [2, 3, 19, 20]. Higher doses (as those reported in this study) may be needed for increased biochemical control of biologically aggressive disease. Conventionally fractionated and IMRT dose escalation studies reported five-year FFBF rates between

69 and 76% [21, 22]. Radical prostatectomy (RP) series indicated five-year recurrence-free survival rates between 65 and 84% [23] for intermediate-risk PCa. Modestly hypofractionated regimens report FFBF rates of 82 and 90% in low and intermediate risk respectively [18, 24]. The current study demonstrates improved results compared to previously published data, regardless of modality.

One prospective study in 40 patients reported a median follow up of 41 months and a FFBF rate of 90% after SBRT with 33.5Gy in five fractions using the ASTRO-Phoenix definition, but only 70% using the three consecutive rises method [3]. A second prospective series conducted in 67 patients indicated a median follow up of 2.7 years and a 4-year FFBF rates of 94% after a five-fraction treatment dose of 36.25Gy in low-risk patients [2]. Prospective registry and retrospective studies have shed light on the efficacy of SBRT for PCa. In a series of SBRT for LR and IR PCa treated with 36.25Gy in five fractions, Katz et al [20] reported a seven-year FFBF of 93.7% with a median follow up of 72 months. Failure rates stratified by NCCN risk groups revealed 95.9% and 89.3% FFBF rates for LR and IR, respectively. Further sub-group analysis revealed Gleason 4+3 patients had the lowest FFBF with a seven- year outcome of 84.3%. In a large multi-center registry trial, Freeman et al. reported a 92% two-year FFBF rate in a mixed population of 2000 PCa patients of mixed risk-groups mostly treated with SBRT monotherapy [25]. A 2-year FFBF rate of 85% was found in the intermediate risk group. Lastly, Chen et al [19] reported a 99% FFBF with a median follow up of 2.4 years in a mixed population of 100 PCa patients treated with and without androgen suppression and SBRT of 35-36.25Gy in five fractions.

Reported rates of acute grade 2 urinary toxicity were 19-35%, acute grade 3 toxicities were 0-6%, late grade 2 GU toxicities were 17-31%, and late grade 3 toxicities were 2-5% when doses of 35-40Gy in 5 fractions were used [3, 15, 19, 26-28]. The cumulative acute grade 2 GU toxicity rate in this study was 22% with no reported acute grade 3 toxicity. Fourteen out of 20 of these toxicities were observed in the 50Gy arm. We also report crude and actuarial late grade 3 GU toxicity rate of 4.4% and 6% respectively with one (1.1%) reported grade 4 toxicity, all in the 50 Gy arm (figure 3). While our study is comparable with previously reported SBRT series, 50Gy induced a small increase in acute GU toxicity. The GU toxicity profile in this study is modestly higher than conventionally fractionated dose escalated radiation treatments [29].

Previous SBRT studies reported acute grade 2 GI toxicity rates of 0-14%, grade 3 of 0-5%, late grade 2 of 0-15%, and late grade 3 of 0-5% using doses of 35-40Gy [3, 15, 19, 26-28]. Doses of 45 and 47.5 Gy are comparable to the reported toxicities but 50Gy resulted in one (1.6%) acute and two (3.3%) late grade 4 toxicities. In all cases but one, patients developed ulceration of the rectum requiring diverting colostomy. We have extensively analyzed the rectal dosimetry of all patients and demonstrated that grade 3 or higher rectal toxicity occurred when $>3\text{cm}^3$ of the rectal wall received 50Gy, $>35\%$ of the rectal wall circumference received 39Gy and $>50\%$ circumference of the rectal wall received 24Gy [13]. When compared to dose escalation and image-guided IMRT, late GI toxicities of 45 and 47.5Gy dose levels were modestly higher [29-32]. While the toxicity in the lower dose arms are comparable to those reported elsewhere it is important to note that the small numbers from the phase I portion may underestimate the overall toxicity rates.

Our center has recently initiated a PCa SBRT study at 45 Gy in 5 fractions (NCT02353832) using a biodegradable spacer injected between the prostate and the rectum to eliminate all rectal toxicity [33]. Other approaches have been taken to avoid toxicity such as simultaneous lesion directed boosts. Initial pilot studies report acute grade 3 GI and GU toxicity rates of 2 and 8% respectively which are similar to whole gland techniques. It is important to note that this method is highly dependent on MRI with reported success rates between 28 and 90% in identifying lesions [34, 35]. The FLAME and SPARC (NCT02145494) trials will further determine the safety and efficacy of this treatment method [36].

Reported ED rates were as high as 40% with conventionally fractionated radiation treatments [37, 38]. A systematic review of RP techniques reported potency rates of 11-40% for open, 13-56% for unilateral and 31-84% for bilateral nerve sparing RP [39]. The 25.6% ED rate in this study is encouraging even when compared to other SBRT studies [17, 40]. The QOL analysis of this study was limited by low questionnaire compliance. Recent studies reported that QOL can be affected up to 3 years from SBRT treatment, whereas our study was limited to 18 months [41].

In the Phase I study only one patient had grade 3 rectal toxicity at 50 Gy for a crude rate of 6.7%. The patient was on immunosuppression and toxicity developed 9 months after treatment. The 50 Gy cohort had a similar crude rate of late GI toxicity which suggests the number of patients with toxicity is a result of the increased number of patients. The Phase II was designed such that if 10 or more patients had severe toxicity the trial would be stopped. Though the current analysis still did not meet the stoppage rules, we recommend using doses less than 50 Gy. The patients with toxicity

required significant surgical intervention as a result of treatment and the probability of toxicity is not warranted given the safety of modest hypofractionation with ADT or lower doses of SBRT [18]. The Phase I study was designed to assess late toxicity at 9 months after radiation therapy however 4 of 6 late GI toxicities occurred greater than 9 months after treatment. Radiation trials in prostate cancer present an interesting design challenge since the time to toxicity can be long. This study underscores the inherent flaws with traditional dose escalation studies and underscores the need for rigorous multi-phase studies in evaluation of new therapies regardless of modality.

We report the results of a prospective study of SBRT in men with low and intermediate-risk PCa. This study shows SBRT with doses of 45 and 47.5 Gy in 5 fractions results in high control rates and acceptable toxicity, however doses of 50 Gy results in high rates of late toxicity. Future studies will clarify the dose necessary to achieve appropriate balance between control and toxicity. Longer follow up and additional trials are necessary before SBRT can be accepted as a standard of care but are warranted given the promising results.

FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1: Mean normalized PSA. PSA values were normalized against respective pre-treatment levels; the mean of the normalized PSA value is presented for each time point. PSA measurements were taken at initial treatment, six weeks after treatment, then every three months for the first year, every six months for years two through four, and yearly thereafter. Median time to nadir was 42 months, with a nadir value of 0.125.

Figure 2: FFBF Kaplan Meier curves for individual dose levels. A single biochemical failure was observed in the 45Gy arm after three years, resulting in actuarial rates of 100% and 98.6% at 3 and 5 years, respectively. No deaths in the study were attributed to prostate cancer or treatment related illnesses. FFBF = Freedom from Biochemical Failure.

Figure 3: Actuarial (A) and Crude (B) Genitourinary and Gastrointestinal (C,D) toxicity. Actuarial grade 3 or greater GU toxicity was found to be 6% at 5 years whereas the crude rate of toxicity was found to be 5.5%. Actuarial grade 3 or greater late GI toxicity was found to be 8% whereas the crude rate is 6.6%.

Figure 4: EPIC urinary (A), bowel (B), sexual function (C), hormone (D), and AUA symptom (E) scores over time by treatment arm. The repeated measure mixed model ANOVA revealed significant score decreases over time in all three EPIC domains and AUASS. Treatment comparisons were performed by dose level for all scoring domains and systems using the One-Way ANOVA with Tukey's correction. No differences were found among dose levels or study phases in any domain or group. N denotes the number of questionnaires completed at each timepoint. EPIC = Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite. AUASS = American Urology Association Symptom Score. ANOVA = Analysis of Variance.

Table 1: Patient characteristics. A –University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, B – University of Minnesota, C – Prairie Lakes Hospital, D – University of Colorado E – Orlando Health

Table 2) Cumulative acute and late GU and GI toxicities by dose levels. GU = Genitourinary. GI = Gastrointestinal.

Acknowledgements:

Role of Funding Source:

The funding agency (the US department of defense) was involved in the design and conduct of the study, collection of data, management of the data, interpretation of the data, and preparation of the data.

The authors would like to sincerely thank Damiana Chiavolini for her assistance in preparation of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest: None declared

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Table 1

Characteristic	45 Gy		47.5 Gy		50 Gy		Phase II		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of Patients	15	16.5%	15	16.5%	14	15.4%	47	51.6%	91	100.0%
Follow up, Months										
Median	74		72		66		47.5		54	
Range	4-94		1-90		3-73		1-64		1-90	
Age, years										
Median	67		67		67		65		66	
Range	55-82		58-76		53-78		52-80		53-80	
Prostate size cm ³										
Median	31		38		30		35		33	
Range	19-60		17-52		17-55		12-59		12-59	
AUA Score										
Median	4.5		4		7		5		5	
Range	0-15		0-13		2-12		5-14		0-15	
PSA										
Median	6.4		5.7		4.5		5.3		5.4	
Range	3.3-12.4		1.3-11.5		0.2-7.9		0.73-16.2		0.2-16.2	
T-stage										
T1c	11	73.3%	13	86.7%	8	57.1%	31	66.0%	63	69.2%
T2a	1	6.7%	1	6.7%	4	28.6%	14	29.8%	20	22.0%
T2b	3	20.0%	1	6.7%	2	14.3%	3	6.4%	8	8.8%
Gleason										
6 (3+3)	4	26.7%	8	53.3%	9	64.3%	22	46.8%	43	47.3%
7 (3+4)	8	53.3%	5	33.3%	3	21.4%	17	36.2%	33	36.3%
7 (4+3)	3	20.0%	2	13.3%	2	14.3%	8	17.0%	15	16.5%
ADT Use										
Yes	4	26.7%	2	13.3%	4	28.6%	5	10.6%	15	16.5%
No	11	73.3%	13	86.7%	10	71.4%	42	89.4%	76	83.5%
NCCN Risk										
Low	3	20.0%	8	53.3%	7	50.0%	15	31.9%	33	36.3%
Intermediate	12	80.0%	7	46.7%	7	50.0%	32	68.1%	58	63.7%
Treatment Site										
A	14	93.3%	8	53.3%	9	64.3%	27	57.4%	58	63.7%
B	1	6.7%	4	26.7%	4	28.6%	11	23.4%	20	22.0%
C	0	0.0%	3	20.0%	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	4	4.4%
D	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	14.9%	7	7.7%
E	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	4.3%	2	2.2%

Table 2

[illegible]

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

B.

Genitourinary Toxicity				
Grade	Acute		Late	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	24	26.4%	46	50.5%
1	44	48.4%	22	24.2%
2	20	22.0%	19	20.9%
3	0	0	4	4.4%
4	0	0	1	1.1%
5	0	0	0	0

D.

Gastrointestinal toxicity				
Grade	Acute		Late	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	37	40.7%	50	54.9%
1	34	37.4%	23	25.3%
2	19	20.9%	12	13.2%
3	1	1.1%	4	4.4%
4	1	1.1%	2	2.2%
5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Figure 4

***Conflict of Interest statement**

Conflict of Interest:

All authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.