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Is the frequency of primary cutaneous melanoma increasing in Turkey? An evaluation of the experiences of two dermatology centers

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ABSTRACT

Introduction and purpose: Since there are only a few population-based studies about the incidence of melanoma in Turkey which do not cover the whole population, we aimed to contribute the data regarding the current situation and the changes in the frequency of primary cutaneous melanoma (PCM) diagnosis in our country by evaluating our results and comparing them with national literature from Turkey.

Methods: Consecutive PCM lesions diagnosed at the Dermatovenereology Departments of the Istanbul Medical Faculty (first center) between 1997 and 2016 and of the Ankara Medical Faculty (second center) between 2007 and 2016 were retrospectively reviewed. The yearly number of PCMs diagnosed in each clinic over study period were compared about any change in the frequency of melanoma diagnosis.

Results: There were 239 and 183 PCMs diagnosed in the two centers in twenty and ten years study period and the mean PCM diagnosis per year was 11.9 and 18.3, respectively. The number of PCM diagnosis markedly increased over time in both centers: 36, 45, 75 and 83 diagnosis for the subsequent five-year periods in the first center and 51 and 132 diagnosis for the subsequent five-year periods, in the second center.

Discussion: It was striking that the number of PCM diagnosis increased steadily in both dermatovenereology centers. As several large melanoma series have been reported from various disciplines all over Turkey in the last two decades and numerous of them have also drawn attention to the increasing frequency of PCM diagnosis similar to our results, supporting data about increasing incidence of melanoma diagnosis for our country have been obtained.

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1. Introduction

Melanoma is a prominent malignant neoplasm that shortens the life span of humans. In the US, melanoma has been reported as the fifth and seventh most common malignancy in males and females, respectively.¹ However, the frequency of this neoplasm varies between different populations, especially depending on the predominant skin type of a population.² Data about the frequency of melanoma and its incidence variation over time is limited in Turkey. Although melanoma is a serious concern for various medical disciplines, the most common type of melanoma, primary

cutaneous melanoma (PCM), is generally diagnosed in dermatology departments. Therefore, the data from dermatology centers, particularly concerning tumors that are diagnosed early, may be more reliable than data from other medical disciplines. In our study, we aimed to investigate the current situation and the frequency variations of melanoma diagnosis by evaluating large series of PCM patients originating from two tertiary dermatology centers and comparing the data from these two centers with national literature about melanoma.^{3–21}

2. Materials and methods

Consecutive patients diagnosed with PCM at the Dermatovenereology Departments of the Istanbul Medical Faculty (first center) between 1 January 1997 and 31 December 2016 and of the Ankara Medical Faculty (second center) between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2016 were retrospectively reviewed. The PCM

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diagnosis of all patients was histopathologically confirmed. Melanoma patients without any skin findings indicating the tumor had been previously excised in another center and referred to our centers for further investigation or follow-up and patients with only cutaneous metastasis of their melanoma were excluded from the study. We stratified the patients into four age groups; 0–24 years, 25–49 years, 50–69 years, and ≥ 70 years at diagnosis. The number of PCM diagnosis per year during the study period was determined. Additionally, the results of each center were divided into five-year periods regarding the number of PCM diagnosis and patients' age groups. All these data during these five-year periods in each center were compared.

3. Results

There were 231 patients (male: 109, female: 122, mean age: 56.3 ± 20 [2–103]) with 239 PCM lesions diagnosed at the Dermatovenereology Department of the Istanbul Medical Faculty over the twenty years who were included in this study. Moreover 161 patients (male: 80, female: 81, mean age: 51.7 ± 18.4 [17–84]) with 183 PCM lesions diagnosed at the Dermatovenereology Department of the Ankara Medical Faculty over the ten years were also included as a second center in another metropolis. The mean number of PCM diagnosis per year was 11.9 (first ten-year period: 8.1, second ten-year period: 15.8) in the first center and 18.3 in the second center. The number of melanoma diagnosis per year for each center during the study period is shown in Fig. 1. In the first center, there were 36, 45, 75 and 83 PCM diagnosis in the first, second, third, and fourth five-year periods, respectively, during twenty-year (1997–2016) study period. In the second center, there were 51 and 132 PCM diagnosis during these third and fourth five-year periods, respectively, including ten-year (2007–2016) study period. When the first centers five-year results were evaluated regarding the patient age groups at diagnosis, the ratios of older age groups were generally increased during five-year periods; the ratio of patients aged 50–69 years old was 19.4%, 35.6%, 37.3% and 42.1% of the first, second, third and fourth five-year periods, respectively, and the ratio of patients aged ≥ 70 years old was 8.3%, 33.3%, 38.7% and 25.3% of the same periods. In the second center, the ratios of older age groups were decreased during the study period; while in

the third five-year period 54.9% of patients were 50–69 years old and 27.5% of patients were ≥ 70 years old, in the fourth five-year period 37.8% of patients were 50–69 years old and 15.9% of patients were ≥ 70 years old.

4. Discussion

Although studies have reported the increasing incidence of melanoma in many countries throughout the world,^{1,2} there is still a lack of population-based study covering the whole population about the incidence of melanoma and its variation over time in Turkey. The increasing trend in melanoma incidence has been noted in European countries including Turkey and in GLOBOCAN 2012 report of International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the age-standardised rate of cutaneous melanoma of Turkey was 2.1 (100.000 persons per year) for both sexes.^{22,23} However, the incidence of melanoma of Turkey was based upon the data of cancer registries belonging to eight provinces other than Istanbul and Ankara.^{22,23} Turkey's cancer data regarding melanoma incidence has been also used in another international multicenter study in which only one cancer registry (Izmir) data covering 5.3% of national population was used.²⁴ Furthermore, in the national cancer data report in 2014 belonging to Turkey Ministry of Health to which data was provided from Istanbul and Ankara cancer registries from 2012 and 2006, respectively, age-standardised rates of cutaneous melanoma were 1.8 (100.000 persons per year) in men and 1.2 (100.000 persons per year) in women.²⁵ Another data source about the frequency of melanoma and its variation over time in Turkey can be based on case series reported from various medical disciplines that deal with melanoma, such as the dermatology, plastic surgery, oncology, and pathology departments of tertiary centers in different geographic regions (see Table 1).^{3–21} In this report originated from Istanbul and Ankara, some supporting data about the increasing frequency of melanoma diagnosis in Turkey have been obtained by comparing the two dermatology centers' five-year period results with each other and with all other series reported from various medical disciplines in Turkey.^{3–21}

In the last 30 years, there have been many studies about cutaneous melanoma reported in Turkey (see Table 1).^{3–21} However, the great majority of these studies were performed by medical

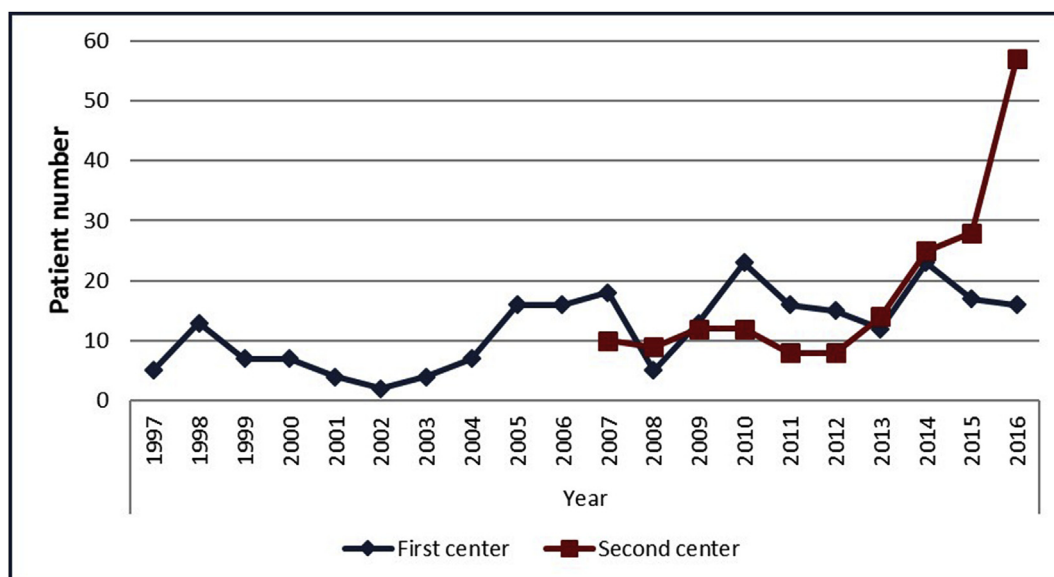


Fig. 1. The number of melanoma diagnosis per year for each center during the study period.

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