Patterns of presentation of lung cancer in Sudan
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Background: In the developed world lung cancer is the most common form of cancer in men and is the leading cause of cancer mortality. The incidence of lung cancer is low in most African countries, but emerging statistics indicate that its incidence is increasing in these countries. Early detection of lung cancer results in favourable outcome and knowledge of patterns of presentation may help physicians to make prompt diagnosis and thereby improve outcome. This study was conducted to achieve this goal by identifying patterns of lung cancer presentation.

Methods: This is a cross-sectional study that included 100 consecutive patients with histologically proven lung cancer on biopsies obtained bronchoscopically. Demographic and clinical data were collected using a structured questionnaire and physical signs were recorded. All patients had computed tomography of the chest and upper abdomen for staging.

Results: The mean age of the patients studied was 56 years. Sixty four percent of patients with lung cancer were male and 60% had no co-morbidity. The commonest presenting symptoms were cough (88.3%) and shortness of breath (71.3%) whereas fever was a rare presenting symptom (6.5%). On physical examination pleural effusion occurred in 39.4% of patients whereas lymphadenopathy and hepatomegaly were the least encountered physical signs occurring in 9.6% and 7.4% of patients respectively. In this cohort 76.6% of patients with non small cell lung cancer had stage 3 or 4 disease.

Conclusion: In this cohort more than 4 in 5 patients presented with cough and fever was a rare presenting symptom. Pleural effusion signs were most prevalent but this may reflect that the great majority of patients in this cohort had advanced disease.

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