Fact about Stomach Cancer Patients in Rural Area

Tadao OBA, M. D.

Director, Kumiai General Hospital Gifu Pref.

We have observed 254 stomach cancer patients who have undergone operation in the last thirteen years at our hospital, which is located in the mountainous region of Gifu prefecture in central Japan. Of the 254 patients, 62% or 159 were farmers and 95 were non-farmers.

Table 1. Cancer Patients

	Male	Female	Total
Farmer	112	47	159
Non-farmer	65	30	95
Total	177	77	254

In our country, 40–50% of stomach cancer patients in the rural areas undergo gastrectomy, while in the cities the percentage is 70.

In our case there is no significant difference between farmers and non-farmers; the rate being 56.6% for farmers and 51.6% for non-farmers. The rate of gastrectomy has improved some in recent years, in our case, but not remarkably. This low rate is still due to the large number of incurable patients who

Table 2. Rate of Gastrectomy in Japan

Rural area	40–50%
City	70%

Rate of Gastrectomy in Our Case

Farmer	56.6%
Non-farmer	51.6%

have delayed medical treatment. Incurable cases are somewhat more marked in the rural areas compared with the urban areas. The reason for this is that the farmers are not so aware of the symptoms of stomach cancer and in many cases do not know they have cancer until the tumor has enlarged to a considerable size.

In our case, the survival rate of the gastrectomy farmer patients is somewhat lower compared with the non-farmers.

The rate for farmer patients who have a period of survival of over three years is 20.0%, and for non-farmer patients 26.1%.

The rates for patients who have a period of survival of over five years are 10.5%, 13.3% respectively.

Table 3. Survival Rate of Gastrectomy Patients

	More than 1 year	More than 2 years	More than 3 years	More than 5 years
Farmer	45.8 %	27.2 %	20.0 %	10.5 %
Non-farmer	59.2 %	34.0 %	26.1 %	13.3 %

In our case, the rate of the size of tumor removed, which is larger than 40sq.cm is 48.7 t% for farmer and 49.1% for non-farmers respectively—thus the high rate of incurability.

Table 4. Size of Tumor.

	Smaller than 40 sq.cm	Larger than 40 sq.cm
Farmer	51.3 %	48.7 %
Non-farmer	50.9 %	49.1 %

The relationship between the size of a tumor and the period of survival is as follows: if the size of the tumor removed is under 30sq.cm, the surviving period is long, the smaller the tumor the longer the period of survival; but this relationship is undetectable when the tumor is over 30sq.cm.

As early diagnosis and early operation are ideal for treating stomach cancer, group medical examination for cancer is very important in the rural areas.

In our country frequency of stomach cancer among inhabitants over 40 years

Table 5. Size of Tumor and Period of Survival

Period of survival	0	1 year	2 years	3 years	5 years
Farmer	54.9sq.cm	57.0sq.cm	49.0sq.cm	29.8sq.cm	27.1sq.cm
Non-farmer	53.7sq.cm	49.0sq.cm	79.8sq.cm	27.0sq.cm	19.0sq.cm

old is higher in the country than in the city. The frequency is found to be about 0.1% in the urban areas and 0.6–0.7% in the rural areas. Namely, this is the result of the great number of cases in the country that have delayed in medical treatment.