OBJEKTIVES: In patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer, estimation of individual prognosis is essential to provide the most suitable biliary stent (self-expanding metal stent or plastic stent). The aim of the current study was to determine prognostic factors for survival in patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer after initial biliary drainage.

PATIENTS AND METHODS: The current study included 278 patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer. Prognostic factors for survival were analyzed using the Cox proportional hazards model, the Kaplan-Meier survival estimator, and the Wilcoxon test for difference in survival.

RESULTS: In univariate analysis, advanced T stage according to the TNM classification (P = 0.021, Wald test) and the presence of distant metastases (P = 0.001, Wald test) were predictive factors for shorter survival. However, in multivariate analysis, the presence of distant metastasis was the only independent prognostic factor. The median survival time after initial biliary drainage was 3.1 and 6.6 months in patients with and without the presence of distant metastases, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS: The presence of distant metastases was identified as the only independent prognostic factor for survival after initial biliary drainage. A self-expanding metal stent should be systematically chosen for patient without distant metastases, whereas polyethylene plastic stents should be
preferred in patients with distant metastases.