Quality of life and comorbidity in localized malignant melanoma: results of a German population-based cohort study.

Abstract:
Incidences of malignant melanoma continue to increase in fair-skinned populations. At least 80% of patients are diagnosed with localized disease and can expect a 5-year relative survival rate of >90%. Given that the median age at diagnosis of malignant melanoma is 59 years, many patients already suffer chronic diseases when they are confronted with cancer. The aim of this study was to analyze the effect of additional chronic diseases on health-related quality of life (QoL) in a population-based cohort of melanoma patients two years after presumably curative treatment. In 2003-2004, 1085 patients with localized malignant melanoma were recruited from the population-based Munich Cancer Registry to answer validated QoL questionnaires. Information about comorbidities was also obtained. Factors predicting QoL were analyzed using multivariate logistic regression models. A total of 781 patients (72%) returned completed questionnaires, of which 664 (61%) could be included in the analyses. Quality of life scores and differences in subgroups (e.g., sex and age) were essentially similar to those in the general population. Age, number of comorbidities, and several chronic diseases (e.g., heart and kidney disease, diabetes, former depression) were the strongest predicting factors and influenced almost every aspect of QoL. Localized
malignant melanoma does not worsen QoL per se, compared with QoL in the general population. Comorbidities have similar effects on QoL in malignant melanoma patients as they do in the general population. Therefore, cohorts of patients with localized malignant melanoma can represent a basis for comparisons with other cohorts of cancer patients to determine the respective impacts of cancer-related and non-cancer-related factors on QoL.