Pelvic sentinel lymph node biopsy: is it worthwhile in melanoma patients?

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Results
The median follow up period was 49 months (Standard Deviation 22.4; range, 10-98 months). The median Breslow thickness was 1.8 mm (range 0.4-13 mm, SD 2.09). Thirty one primary melanomas (30%) showed histological ulceration. Of the 104 patients, 83 were SN negative (80%). All SN positive patients underwent ilio-obturator and inguinal dissection. Two patients (2.4%; 95% CI: 1.5%-8.8%) with negative SNs had pelvic recurrence during follow up. Among patients treated with ilioinguinal dissection, 3 (14%; 95% CI: 4%-35%) were found to have positive pelvic lymph nodes. At 5 years, 79% of all patients were alive, 66% were alive and free of disease and no significant difference was found by SN status (Log-rank P-values: 0.31 and 0.15, for OS and DFS respectively): in particular 95% CI of 5-years DFS ranges from 57% to 82% for negative SNB and from 28% to 78% for positive SNB. 5-year OS in SN negative patients was 78% and in SN positive patients 79%.

Conclusions
A little worse progression of the disease, in term of pelvic recurrence and DFS, has been assessed in patient presenting pelvic hot-spots at lymphoscintigraphy, not treated with ilioinguinal dissection, respect the data present in literature. Skip metastases to deep sentinel nodes could explain the greater rate of pelvic recurrence and the worse DFS in SLN negative patients. The sample size of our study cannot bring to conclusive results; we recommend further studies to improve our knowledge in the role of pelvic sentinel node in the natural history of melanoma.

KEY WORDS: melanoma, pelvic sentinel lymph node.