

## Second-line chemotherapy with irinotecan, 5-fluorouracil and leucovorin (FOLFIRI) in relapsed or metastatic gastric cancer: lessons from clinical practice

Mirco Pistelli<sup>1</sup>, Mario Scartozzi<sup>2</sup>, Alessandro Bittoni<sup>1</sup>, Eva Galizia<sup>3</sup>, Rossana Berardi<sup>2</sup>, and Stefano Cascinu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Scuola di Specializzazione in Oncologia, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona;

<sup>2</sup>Clinica di Oncologia Medica, AO Ospedali Riuniti-Ancona, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona; <sup>3</sup>Oncologia Medica, Ospedale "Profili", Fabriano, Italy

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### ABSTRACT

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**Aims and background.** Soon after the approval of irinotecan for second-line therapy of advanced gastric cancer, the FOLFIRI regimen represented a possible treatment choice in clinical practice. However, there was still scarce data on the efficacy of irinotecan in this setting. We retrospectively evaluated the efficacy of FOLFIRI as second-line treatment in advanced gastric cancer patients progressing after platinum-based chemotherapy.

**Methods.** Patients with metastatic gastric cancer progressing after platinum-based chemotherapy who received FOLFIRI as second-line chemotherapy were included in our analysis.

**Results.** Thirty patients were consecutively treated (20 males and 10 females). Median age was 62 years (range, 36-78). All patients had metastatic disease. In 17 cases (56.6%), peritoneal tumor diffusion was present. Six patients (20%) had previously received 5-fluorouracil-based adjuvant chemotherapy. The median number of cycles administered was 4 (range, 1-12). Partial remission was obtained in 1 case (3%) and stable disease in 8 patients (27%). Median progression-free survival and overall survival were 2.7 months and 5.5 months, respectively. The most common toxicities (grade 2-3) observed were neutropenia (13.3%), diarrhea (10%) and vomiting (30%). Ten patients (10%) received 3 or less courses of chemotherapy. In these cases, treatment was stopped before scheduled for accelerated worsening of clinical conditions.

**Conclusions.** FOLFIRI resulted scarcely active in metastatic gastric cancer patients pre-treated with platinum-based chemotherapy. In this setting, the real benefit of a second-line chemotherapy with the FOLFIRI regimen should be carefully re-considered, especially according to the clinical condition of the patient and possible treatment-related side effects.

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**Key words:** chemotherapy, gastric cancer, FOLFIRI.

*Correspondence to:* Mario Scartozzi, MD, Clinica di Oncologia Medica, AO Ospedali Riuniti-Ancona, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona, Italy.

Tel +39-071-5963834;  
fax +39-071-5964291;  
e-mail marioscartozzi@gmail.com,  
mirco.pistelli@alice.it

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