

AB171. SOH22ABS198. Has the coronavirus disease (COVID) pandemic resulted in delayed presentations in elderly patients with breast cancer?

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Background: The pressure on the Irish healthcare system imparted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has raised concerns that related care delays will result in excess cancer-related deaths. Studies of non-oncology, chronic illnesses have shown that elderly patients are at greatest likelihood to delay health care over COVID concerns. The aim of this study was to assess stage at presentation in elderly patients with breast cancer both before and during the COVID pandemic.

Methods: We conducted a retrospective review of all women over 70 years of age with a new diagnosis of invasive breast cancer who presented during one of two 18-month periods: pre COVID (01/04/2018–01/10/2019) and during COVID (01/04/2020–01/10/2021). Clinical, radiological and pathological data were assessed and used to assign an American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) stage. Stage at presentation were compared for the two time periods using Chi-squared tables.

Results: In the pre-COVID period, 250 patients (median age 77 years) aged 70 and older received a new diagnosis of invasive breast cancer compared with 231 patients (median age 78 years). There was no difference in the stage at presentation between the two periods studied (Chi-square test $P=0.628$) with the majority of patients presenting with stage II disease (52% of patients pre-COVID and 52%

during COVID).

Conclusions: To date we have not noted a migration to a higher stage of presentation with breast cancer in elderly patients during the COVID pandemic. The findings may reflect a more indolent biology in this cohort and also point to the value of continued resourcing and provision of rapid access breast clinics.

Keywords: Breast cancer; elderly; coronavirus disease (COVID); stage; delay

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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