To the Editor:

We read with great interest the article by Dr. Lee et al. This retrospective study enrolling 497 patients determined that an elevated pretreatment neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio (NLR) and platelet-lymphocyte ratio (PLR) independently and in combination significantly predicted poor overall survival and progression-free survival in patients with locally advanced pancreatic cancer treated with chemoradiotherapy. Herein, we would like to raise the following comments.

In this study, between patients with normal NLR and elevated NLR and between patients with normal PLR and elevated PLR, significant differences existed in some aspects of patient and tumor characteristics, including subsite of tumor, clinical T stage, tumor size, resectability and level of CA 19-9 (all p<0.05), suggesting an unbalanced enrollment in the two comparisons. To our knowledge, propensity score matching (PSM) analysis has generally been used in retrospective observational studies, and PSM enables better balancing between groups across all potential risk factors and evaluates the extent of balanced matching using a measurable approach. In 2017, Yang et al. investigated a similar topic of the association between NLR and prognosis of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) after liver resection using PSM analysis and concluded that NLR was an independent prognostic factor for poorer survival in HCC patients undergoing liver resection. Therefore, in view of the higher statistical credibility of PSM analysis, we highly suggest its use.

Furthermore, although the present study contained a certain number of variables on patient and tumor characteristics, it still seemed inadequate. For example, prognostic nutritional index, plasma fibrinogen levels, presence of ascites, serum albumin levels, and so forth, were not provided, and these factors might actually influence the prognosis in patients with locally advanced pancreatic cancer treated with chemoradiotherapy and have also been widely covered and studied in previous research.

In summary, clarification regarding the omissions mentioned above would greatly solidify the conclusions of the study by Dr. Lee et al.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

REFERENCES


