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Multidimensional Determinants of Cardiovascular Mortality in Tongue Cancer Survivors: A Population - Based Cohort Study Leveraging SEER Data

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Многомерные детерминанты смертности в результате сердечно-сосудистых заболеваний у пациентов, переживших рак языка: популяционное когортное исследование на базе данных SEER

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舌癌幸存者心血管疾病死亡率的多维决定因素：基于SEER数据库的人群队列研究

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Background. Tongue cancer (TC) is a prevalent head and neck malignancy with significant morbidity and mortality. Epidemiological studies indicate that mortality causes in TC patients shift over time: cancer-related deaths dominate early stages, while long-term survivors face increasing non-cancer mortality, primarily cardiovascular disease (CVD). Treatment modalities such as radiotherapy (RT) and chemotherapy may exacerbate CVD risks, compounded by sociodemographic and tumor-related heterogeneity.

Objective. This study aimed to quantify CVD-related mortality risk in TC survivors, identify high-risk subgroups, and explore multidimensional determinants using population-level data.

Methods. A retrospective cohort study was conducted using the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) database (2000–2021). A total of 7,691 TC patients were included after applying exclusion criteria. Standardized mortality ratios (SMRs) and excess risks were calculated by comparing observed CVD deaths to expected rates in age-, sex-, and race-matched general populations. Nelson-Aalen cumulative hazard curves and Poisson regression were employed for risk stratification.

Results. CVD-related mortality in TC survivors was significantly elevated (SMR = 3.16, 95% CI: 3.15–3.17), with pronounced heterogeneity across subgroups. Radiotherapy-exposed patients (SMR = 11.48), those with distant metastases (SMR = 7.05), and socially vulnerable populations – Black individuals (SMR = 5.76) and widowed/separated patients (SMR = 15.92–16.18) – faced the highest risks. Ischemic heart disease dominated CVD deaths (42.9%, SMR = 15.61), followed by cerebrovascular diseases (17.3%, SMR = 13.69). Non-chemotherapy patients exhibited elevated risks (SMR = 7.33), potentially due to comorbidities or unmeasured treatment interactions.

Conclusion. TC survivors face a substantially increased CVD mortality burden, driven by treatment toxicity, tumor biology, and sociodemographic disparities. Integrating cardiovascular surveillance into survivorship care is critical, particularly for irradiated patients and socially vulnerable groups. Future research should prioritize mechanistic studies, risk prediction models, and equity-focused interventions to mitigate dual cancer-CVD burdens.

Key words: TC SEER Cardiovascular Disease

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The authors are responsible for the originality of the data presented and the possibility of publishing illustrative material – tables, drawings, photographs of patients.

Введение. Рак языка (РЯ) является распространенной злокачественной опухолью головы и шеи с высокой заболеваемостью и смертностью. Эпидемиологические исследования показывают, что структура причин смерти у пациентов с РЯ изменяется со временем: в ранние сроки преобладает смертность по причине онкологического заболевания, тогда как у долгожителей возрастает доля причин не связанных с онкологическим заболеванием, в первую очередь сердечно-сосудистых заболеваний (ССЗ). Лечебные подходы, такие как лучевая и химиотерапия, могут дополнительно увеличивать сердечно-сосудистые риски.

Цель. Определить риск смертности от сердечно-сосудистых заболеваний у пациентов, переживших рак языка, выявить группы высокого риска и проанализировать многомерные детерминанты на популяционном уровне.

Материалы и методы. Проведено ретроспективное когортное исследование на основе базы SEER (2000–2021 гг.). В анализ включено 7691 пациент с РЯ после применения критериев исключения. Стандартизованные коэффициенты смертности (SMR) и избыточный риск определялись путем сравнения наблюдаемой смертности от ССЗ с ожидаемой в сопоставимых по возрасту, полу и расе группах населения. Для стратификации риска использовали кривые накопленного риска Нельсона—Алена и пуассоновскую регрессию.

Результаты. Риск смертности от ССЗ у пациентов с РЯ был существенно выше (SMR = 3,16; 95% ДИ: 3,15–3,17), с выраженной гетерогенностью между подгруппами. Наивысший риск зафиксирован у пациентов, подвергшихся лучевой терапии (SMR = 11,48), с отдалёнными метастазами (SMR = 7,05), а также среди социально уязвимых групп — афроамериканцев (SMR = 5,76) и вдов/разведённых (SMR = 15,92–16,18). Основной причиной ССЗ стала ишемическая болезнь сердца (42,9%, SMR = 15,61), далее следовали цереброваскулярные заболевания (17,3%, SMR = 13,69). У пациентов, не получавших химиотерапию, также отмечен повышенный риск (SMR = 7,33), что может быть связано с сопутствующей патологией либо не описанными методами лечения.

Заключение. Выжившие после рака языка имеют значительно повышенное бремя смертности от сердечно-сосудистых заболеваний, обусловленное токсичностью терапии, особенностями опухоли и социально-демографическими неравенствами. Необходима интеграция сердечно-сосудистого мониторинга в наблюдение за такими пациентами, особенно после лучевой терапии и в группах с социальной уязвимостью. Дальнейшие исследования должны быть направлены на механистические аспекты, создание прогностических моделей риска и разработку интервенций, ориентированных на уменьшение двойного бремени онкологических и сердечно-сосудистых заболеваний.

Ключевые слова: рак языка; SEER (Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results); сердечно-сосудистые заболевания (ССЗ)

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引言：舌癌是一种常见的头颈部恶性肿瘤，具有高发病率和高死亡率的特点。流行病学研究表明，舌癌患者的死因结构随时间而变化：早期以癌症相关死亡为主，而在长期生存者中，非癌症相关死因的比例增加，其中首要的是心血管疾病。放射治疗和化学治疗等治疗方式可能进一步增加心血管风险。

目的：确定舌癌幸存者心血管疾病死亡风险，识别高风险人群，并在人群水平上分析其多维决定因素

材料与方法：基于SEER数据库（2000—2021年）进行了一项回顾性队列研究。应用排除标准后，共纳入7691例舌癌患者进行分析。通过比较观察到的死亡率与年龄、性别和种族匹配人群中的预期死亡率，计算了标准化死亡率（SMR）和超额风险。使用Nelson-Aalen累积风险曲线和泊松回归进行风险分层。

结果：合并心血管疾病的舌癌患者的死亡风险显著升高（SMR = 3.16; 95% CI: 3.15–3.17），且各亚组间存在明显的异质性。最高风险见于接受过放射治疗的患者（SMR = 11.48）、存在远处转移的患者（SMR = 7.05），以及社会弱势群体—非裔美国人（SMR = 5.76）和丧偶/离异人群（SMR = 15.92–16.18）。其主要死因是缺血性心脏病（42.9%, SMR = 15.61），其次是脑血管疾病（17.3%, SMR = 13.69）。未接受化疗的患者也观察到风险升高（SMR = 7.33），这可能与合并症或未记录的治疗方法有关。

结论：舌癌幸存者面临着显著升高的心血管疾病死亡负担，这归因于治疗的毒性、肿瘤特征以及社会人口学不平等。有必要将心血管监测整合到此类患者的随访中，特别是在放射治疗后和社会弱势群体中。未来的研究应关注机制方面、建立风险预测模型以及制定旨在减轻癌症和心血管疾病双重负担的干预措施。

关键词：舌癌；SEER（监测、流行病学和最终结果数据库）；心血管疾病

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Background

TC (TC) is one of the most common head and neck malignancies globally, with significant morbidity and mortality rates [1, 2]. Epidemiological studies indicate that causes of death in TC patients exhibit distinct time-dependent patterns: cancer-related deaths dominate during early follow-up periods, while long-term survivors face a gradual shift in mortality risk toward non-cancer factors, particularly cardiovascular disease (CVD) [3,4]. Treatment modalities, including surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy, may substantially elevate non-cancer mortality risks due to treatment-related toxicities. Additionally, TC mortality risk demonstrates marked heterogeneity influenced by multidimensional factors such as age, race, marital status, and tumor stage [5].

Despite advancements in therapeutic strategies and improved prognoses, TC patients remain at high risk of mortality, especially from CVD, which significantly exceeds rates observed in the general population. This study aimed to comprehensively analyze mortality patterns and associated risk factors in TC patients, with a focus on the incidence and determinants of CVD-related deaths [6,7,8].

The Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) database, a publicly accessible cancer registry encompassing over 8 million cancer cases across multiple U.S. states, was utilized for this study. Renowned for its large sample size and comprehensive follow-up information, the SEER database has been widely employed to investigate cancer incidence, prognosis, and mortality risks, including assessments for colorectal and breast cancers [9,10]. Leveraging this population-based cohort, we systematically evaluated mortality risks in TC patients, emphasizing the characteristics of CVD-related deaths and high-risk subgroups to provide robust evidence for clinical practice.

Materials and methods

This study extracted data from the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) database for all TC patients diagnosed between January 1, 2000, and December 31, 2021. For comparison, general population mortality data from the same period (2000–2021) were obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

[11]. A total of 10,728 patients diagnosed with TC were initially identified. Inclusion criteria required histologically confirmed tongue malignancies, while exclusion criteria removed patients who received no antitumor therapy, those with secondary or multiple primary tumors, and cases with incomplete diagnostic/survival information or tumors identified solely via death certificates. After applying these criteria, 7,691 eligible patients were included, of whom 492 died from cardiovascular disease (CVD) [12]. CVD-related deaths, defined by SEER codes for six conditions – (1) cerebrovascular diseases, (2) diseases of arteries/arterioles/capillaries, (3) hypertension, (4) ischemic heart disease, (5) pulmonary heart disease, and (6) other/unspecified circulatory disorders – served as the primary endpoint. Competing risks included TC-related deaths, deaths from metastatic complications, and non-CVD/non-cancer deaths. This retrospective study utilized de-identified clinical data and adhered to SEER ethical guidelines, exempting informed consent.

This multicenter retrospective cohort study analyzed demographic and clinical variables: age at diagnosis, race, sex, diagnosis year, histological type, tumor stage, radiotherapy/chemotherapy status, marital status, median household income, and follow-up information (survival time and cause of death). Causes of death were categorized as: (1) TC-related, (2) metastatic/complication-related, (3) CVD-related, or (4) other non-cancer causes. CVD-related deaths were specifically coded using SEER-defined terms: hypertensive disease, ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular diseases, pulmonary heart disease, diseases of arteries/arterioles/capillaries, and other/unspecified circulatory system disorders [13].

The primary outcome was CVD-related death. Patients not deceased due to CVD at the last follow-up were censored. Follow-up duration was calculated from the date of diagnosis to death or censoring. Survival times recorded as 0 months were converted to 0.5 months per epidemiological conventions.

Statistical Analysis

CVD mortality rates were calculated by dividing CVD-related deaths by the total number of TC patients. Standardized mortality ratios (SMRs) were derived by comparing observed CVD deaths in TC subgroups to expected deaths in age-, sex-, and race-matched general populations (reference data from the National Cancer

Institute). Poisson regression was used to estimate 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for SMRs. Excess risk was defined as:

Nelson-Aalen cumulative hazard curves were plotted to assess temporal trends in CVD-related mortality across subgroups. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Analyses were performed using SEER*STAT, Python, and Microsoft Excel 2019.

Results

The study included 7,691 eligible TC patients with a mean age of 62.83 years and a median follow-up duration of 38 months. The majority of patients were aged 40–59 years (35.3%), White ($n=6,252$, 81.2%), male ($n=4,333$, 56.3%), married ($n=4,249$, 55.24%), and had localized tumor invasion ($n=4,866$, 63.26%). Median household income exceeded \$70,000 in 79.88% of cases. Histologically, squamous cell carcinoma predominated ($n=7,561$, 98.3%), while other pathological types accounted for 1.69% ($n=130$). Radiotherapy and chemotherapy were administered to 27.42% ($n=2,109$) and 17.38% ($n=1,331$) of patients, respectively.

Overall survival analysis revealed significant time-dependent patterns in all-cause mortality. Among 3,761 deaths during follow-up, mortality peaked in early follow-up periods: 34.69% ($n=1,305$) occurred within <1 year, followed by 33.98% ($n=1,278$) in the 1–3 year interval. A dynamic shift in causes of death was observed: cancer-related deaths declined from 56.8% in the <1-year period to 15.3% in the >10-year period (χ^2 trend test, $p < 0.001$), while non-cancer-related deaths increased from 41.9% to 80.2%, indicating a transition toward non-oncological mortality risks in long-term survivors (Figure 1). Among non-cancer deaths, cardiovascular disease (CVD) was the leading cause ($n=491$, 13.06%), with significant heterogeneity in CVD subtypes ($p < 0.05$): ischemic heart disease predominated (42.9%), followed by other/unspecified circulatory disorders (23.6%), cerebrovascular diseases (17.3%), hypertensive disease (10.7%), and pulmonary heart disease/arterial disorders (2.6% each).

A total of 491 TC patients died from cardiovascular disease (CVD). Compared to an age-, sex-, and race-matched general population cohort (expected deaths = 155.2), the standardized mortality ratio (SMR) was 3.16 (95% CI: 3.15–3.17, $p < 0.0001$), with an excess risk of 335.8 per 10,000 person-years. Baseline characteristics and subgroup-specific SMRs are detailed in Table 1.

This study demonstrates that CVD-related mortality risk in TC patients is significantly elevated compared to the general population (overall SMR = 3.16, 95% CI: 3.15–3.17), with marked heterogeneity across demographic and clinical subgroups. Age exhibited a nonlinear inverse association with SMR: middle-aged to older patients (60–69 years: SMR = 3.55; 70–79 years: SMR = 3.59) had the highest risks, whereas younger (15–39 years: SMR = 1.08) and elderly (≥ 80 years: SMR = 2.95) patients showed lower risks (all $p < 0.05$). Racial disparities were pronounced, with Black patients facing the highest risk (SMR = 5.76, 95% CI: 4.00–8.10), followed by Asian or Pacific Islander patients (SMR = 5.51, 95% CI: 4.19–7.25). Social support deficits further amplified risk, as separated patients exhibited an exceptionally high SMR of 16.18 ($p < 0.05$). Tumor-related factors also influenced outcomes: distant metastases (SMR = 7.05, 95% CI: 4.61–10.36) and radiotherapy exposure (SMR = 11.48 vs. 2.03 in non-irradiated patients) were associated with substantially elevated CVD mortality.

Ischemic heart disease was the leading cause of cardiovascular disease (CVD)-related deaths, accounting for 42.9% of CVD mortality (Standardized Mortality Ratio [SMR] = 15.61, 95% CI: 13.46–18.00).

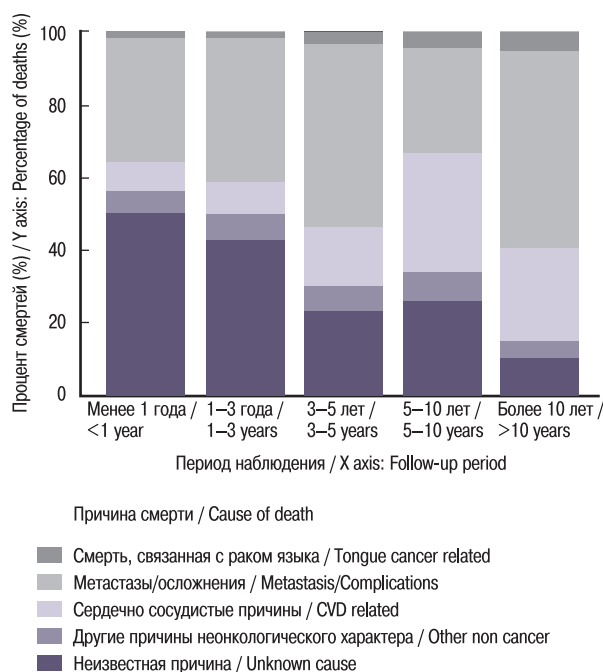


Рис. 1. Доля причин смерти у пациентов с раком языка по периодам наблюдения

Fig. 1. Proportion of causes of death in tongue cancer patients by follow up period

Other CVD subtypes also exhibited significantly elevated risks: cerebrovascular diseases (17.3% of CVD deaths, SMR = 13.69), other/unspecified circulatory disorders (23.6%, SMR = 13.52), and hypertensive disease (10.7%, SMR = 11.25) (all $P < 0.05$). Notably, despite fewer deaths from pulmonary heart disease (SMR = 13.68) and diseases of arteries/capillaries (SMR = 12.50), their risks remained significantly higher than those in the general population ($P < 0.05$).

Figure 2 displays Nelson-Aalen cumulative hazard curves for cardiovascular disease (CVD)-related mortality in TC patients, stratified by subgroups including age, race, sex, marital status, household income, tumor stage, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy. The analysis demonstrates that cumulative CVD mortality risks significantly increased with prolonged follow-up in high-risk subgroups, such as older patients (e.g., ≥ 70 years), those with distant metastases, individuals receiving radiotherapy, Black and Asian/Pacific Islander populations, and widowed or separated patients. Key determinants of elevated CVD mortality included advanced tumor stage (e.g., distant metastasis: SMR = 7.05), treatment modalities (e.g., radiotherapy: SMR = 11.48), race (e.g., Black patients: SMR = 5.76), marital status (e.g., separated individuals: SMR = 16.18), and older age (60–79 years: SMR = 3.55–3.59). These factors exhibited strong associations with CVD-related mortality ($P < 0.05$ for all), underscoring the multifactorial nature of cardiovascular risk in this population.

Discussion

TC is one of the most common head and neck malignancies worldwide, with significant prognostic disparities across disease stages. Advanced-stage patients exhibit substantially lower survival rates compared to early-stage counterparts. While advancements

Таблица 1. Риск смерти от сердечнососудистых заболеваний у пациентов с раком языка в разрезе демографических и опухолевых характеристик

Table 1: The cardiovascular disease (CVD) mortality risk among TC patients stratified by demographics and tumor characteristics

		Наблюдаемые смерти от ССЗ/ Observed CVD deaths	Ожидаемые смерти/ Expected deaths	СМР/ SMR	95%ДИ /95%CI	P-значение/ P-value	Избыточный риск/ Excess Risk	Всего случаев / Total cases	Общие персоны-годы выживания/ Total person- years of survival
		491	155.2	3.16	3.15-3.17	P< 0.0001	335.8	7691	45459.25
Возраст/ Age	15-39	2	1.85	1.08	0.13-3.92	P>0.05	0.31	490	3712.25
	40-59	78	38.01	2.05	1.60,2.51	P<0.05	14.73	2716	19007.58
	60-69	103	28.98	3.55	2.87,4.24	P<0.05	36.64	2023	12073.33
	70-79	155	43.21	3.59	3.02,4.15	P<0.05	77.78	1440	7202.00
	80+	153	51.91	2.95	2.48,3.41	P<0.05	98.99	1021	3460.42
Пол/Sex	Мужской/male	308	62.87	4.90	4.38-5.48	P<0.05	56.57	4333	25146.42
	Женский/female	183	36.56	5.01	4.33-5.78	P<0.05	43.61	3358	20312.83
Паса/Race	Белые/White	403	82.72	4.87	4.42-5.37	P<0.05	51.17	6252	37599.42
	Черные/Black	33	5.73	5.76	4.00-8.10	P<0.05	80.12	341	1432.08
	Азиаты или уроженцы тихоокеанских островов/Asian or Pacific Islander	51	9.25	5.51	4.19- 7.25	P<0.05	39.81	1050	6167.67
	Американские индейцы/коренные жители Аляски/ American Indian/ Alaska Native	4	0.91	4.40	1.20-11.30	P<0.05	67.39	46	260.08
Семейное положение/Marital Status	Разведены/Divorced	55	8.79	6.26	4.74-8.23	P<0.05	53.97	854	4624.17
	Состоит в браке/Married	228	41.37	5.51	4.83-6.27	P<0.05	43.94	4249	27580.88
	В раздельном проживании/Separated	11	0.68	16.18		P<0.05	119.77	86	379.75
	Не состоит в браке/Single	72	14.77	4.87	3.84-6.06	P<0.05	36.47	1568	8951.25
	Вдовец/вдова/Widowed	125	7.85	15.92	13.27-18.96	P<0.05	125.37	934	3924.00
Стадия опухоли / Tumor stage	Только локализованная/Localized only	345	61.81	5.58	5.02-6.20	P<0.05	58.19	4866	34338.08
	Отдаленные очаги и/или лимфоузлы вовлечены/Distant site(s)/node(s) involved	26	3.69	7.05	4.61-10.36	P<0.05	36.57	610	1677.25
	Регионарное поражение только прямым распространением/Regional by direct extension only	24	3.76	6.38	4.10-9.51	P<0.05	62.63	322	1505.42
	Регионарное поражение с прямым распространением и поражением лимфатических узлов/Regional by both direct extension and lymph node involvement	20	3.16	6.33	3.87-9.78	P<0.05	46.89	360	1052.33
	Поражены только регионарные лимфатические узлы/Regional lymph nodes involved only	66	21.58	3.06	2.39-3.85	P<0.05	34.38	1291	6165.92
	Неизвестно/не стадировано/не уточнено/данные из свидетельства о смерти (DCO)/ Unknown/unstaged/ unspecified/DCO	10	1.44	6.94	3.33-12.77	P<0.05	35.54	242	720.25
Лучевая терапия/ Radio-therapy	Да/Yes	387	33.72	11.48	10.36-12.71	P<0.05	411.92	858	11238.58
	Нет/No	104	51.29	2.03	1.66-2.47	P<0.05	1.54	433	34193.75
Химио-терапия/ Chemo-therapy	Да/Yes	54	17.20	3.14	2.37-4.12	P<0.05	66.67	552	5734.75
	Нет/No	437	59.60	7.33	6.66-8.06	P<0.05	511.91	739	39734.5

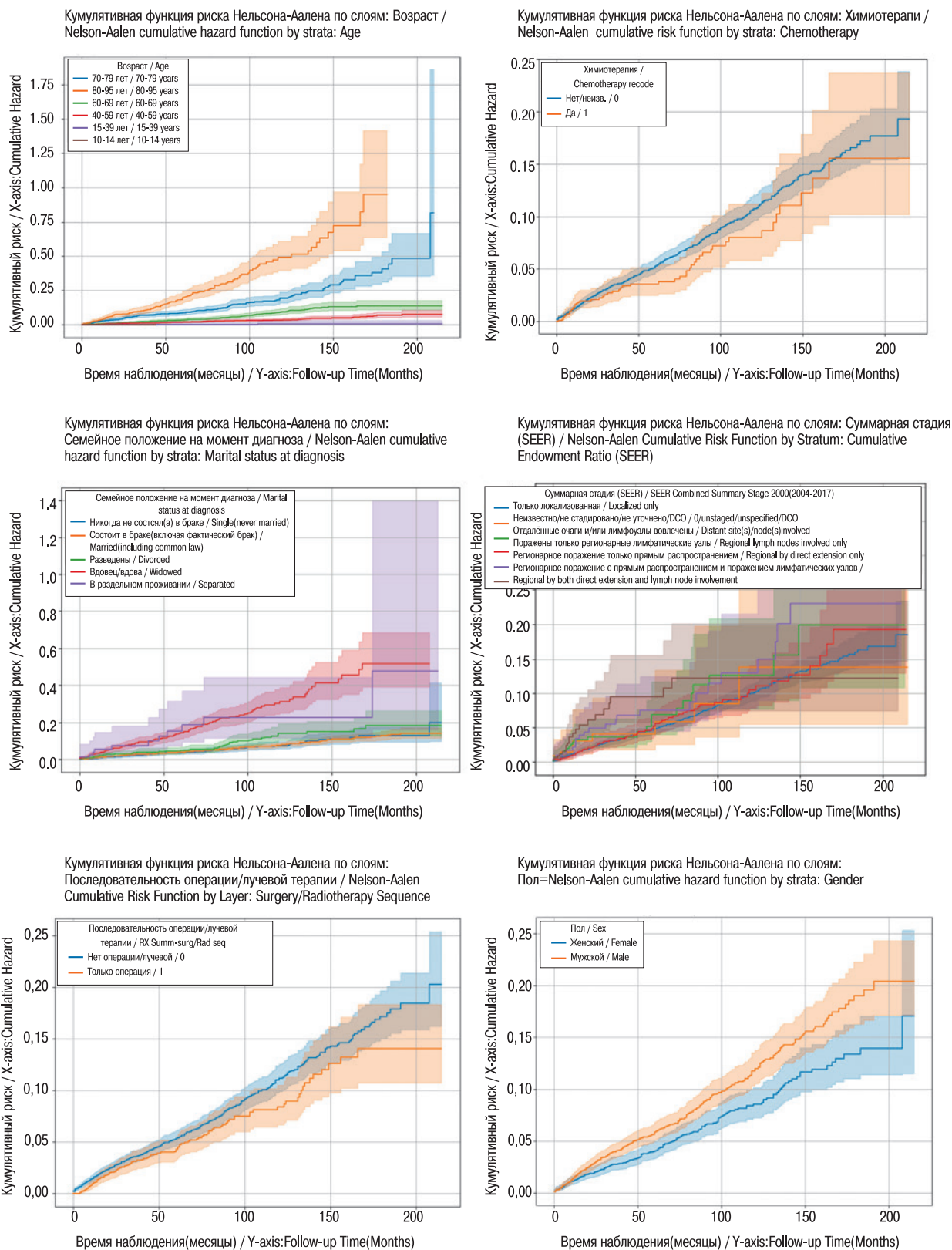


Рисунок 2. Кумулятивные кривые риска Нельсона–Аалена для смертности от сердечно сосудистых заболеваний у пациентов с раком языка

Figure 2. Nelson-Aalen Cumulative Hazard Curves for CVD-Related Mortality in TC Patients

Таблица 2. Риск смерти от различных типов ССЗ у пациентов с раком языка
Table 2: The mortality risk of different types of CVD among TC patients

Показатель / Indicator	Наблюдаемые смерти от ССЗ / Observed CVD deaths	Ожидаемые смерти / Expected deaths	СМР / SMR	95% ДИ / 95% CI	Р-значение / P-value	Избыточный риск / Excess Risk	Персональные годы выжива- ния, связанные со смерт- ностью от ССЗ / Total person-years of survival related to CVD mortality
Итого / Total	491	155.2	3.16	3.15–3.17	P<0.05	335.8	1432.26
Ишемическая болезнь сердца / Ischemic heart disease	211	13.52	15.61	13.46–18.00	P<0.05	197.48	901.42
Заболевания артерий, артериол и капилляров / Diseases of arteries, arterioles and capillaries	13	1.04	12.50	7.14–21.87	P<0.05	11.96	69.42
Цереброваскулярные заболевания / Cerebrovascular diseases	85	6.21	13.69	11.09–16.87	P<0.05	78.79	413.92
Легочное сердце / Pulmonary heart disease	13	0.95	13.68	7.82–23.91	P<0.05	12.05	63.00
Гипертоническая болезнь / Hypertensive disease	53	4.71	11.25	8.65–14.63	P<0.05	48.29	314.00
Прочие и неуточненные заболевания системы кровообращения / Other and unspecified disorders of the circulatory system	116	8.58	13.52	11.34–16.08	P<0.05	107.42	571.92

in multimodal therapies – including surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy – have modestly improved outcomes for advanced TC, overall prognosis remains suboptimal. Despite extensive research on treatment strategies and long-term survival in advanced disease, studies focusing on mortality risk determinants, particularly non-cancer causes such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), remain limited.

This study systematically evaluated CVD-related mortality risk in TC patients using the SEER database, revealing a significantly elevated standardized mortality ratio (SMR = 3.16, 95% CI: 3.15–3.17) compared to the general population, with marked multidimensional heterogeneity. First, age emerged as a critical determinant: middle-aged to older patients (60–79 years) faced the highest risk (SMR = 3.55–3.59), whereas younger (15–39 years, SMR = 1.08) and elderly (≥ 80 years, SMR = 2.95) patients exhibited lower risks. This pattern may reflect age-related declines in baseline cardiovascular health and cumulative treatment toxicities. Second, tumor stage strongly influenced outcomes: distant metastases conferred the highest cumulative risk (SMR = 7.05), followed by locally advanced disease with nodal involvement, while localized tumors carried the lowest risk. These findings suggest that tumor burden exacerbates cardiovascular injury, potentially through systemic inflammation or metabolic dysregulation [14].

The impact of treatment modalities on cardiovascular disease (CVD) mortality risk is significant. Patients who underwent radiotherapy exhibited a substantially higher risk of CVD-related mortality compared to those who did not receive radiotherapy (SMR = 11.48 vs. 2.03). Similarly, patients who did not undergo chemotherapy also demonstrated a higher risk (SMR = 7.33). This finding may appear to deviate from general medical logic and could be attributed to several factors. Prior to initiating antitumor treatments, patients' cardiovascular health is thoroughly evaluated, and only those with relatively better cardiovascular conditions are deemed eligible for chemotherapy. Consequently, chemotherapy patients tend to benefit from longer survival times, which are closely associated with an increased likelihood of CVD-related mortality [15,16]. The chemotherapy regimens commonly used for tongue cancer patients include platinum-based agents and taxanes, both of which exert multifaceted effects on the cardiovascular system.

Platinum-based chemotherapeutic agents (e.g., cisplatin, carboplatin, oxaliplatin) are widely utilized for their broad-spectrum antitumor efficacy, including the treatment of head and neck cancers, lung cancer, and breast cancer [17]. These agents interact with DNA, inducing cross-linking, disrupting DNA function, and ultimately leading to apoptosis. In a study of testicular cancer survivors, 53% of patients treated with cisplatin developed hypertension, with an incidence rate 2.3 times higher than that of the control group [18].

Sociodemographic disparities further stratified risk. Black (SMR = 5.76, 95% CI: 4.00–8.10) and Asian/Pacific Islander (SMR = 5.51, 95% CI: 4.19–7.25) patients faced disproportionately higher CVD mortality than White patients (SMR = 4.87), likely due to socioeconomic inequities, healthcare access barriers, or genetic predispositions. Marital status also significantly impacted outcomes: widowed (SMR = 15.92) or separated (SMR = 16.18) patients had exceptionally high risks compared to married counterparts (SMR = 5.51), highlighting the role of social support in mitigating cardiovascular morbidity [19,20].

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, reliance on SEER data introduces potential biases from incomplete records (e.g., missing diagnostic/survival dates) and unmeasured confounders (e.g., lifestyle factors, comorbidities). Second, competing risks from complex mortality causes (e.g., cancer progression, non-CVD comorbidities) may overestimate CVD-specific mortality. Third, insufficient treatment details (e.g., radiotherapy doses, chemotherapy regimens) limit mechanistic insights into therapy-related cardiovascular toxicity. Finally, the 21-year study span introduces temporal heterogeneity, as evolving treatment protocols and CVD management guidelines may affect longitudinal risk patterns.

Future Directions

Prospective cohorts integrating granular treatment data, cardiovascular biomarkers (e.g., high-sensitivity troponin, inflammatory cytokines), and social determinants of health are needed

to clarify mechanisms – such as radiation-induced oxidative stress or tumor-derived endothelial damage – and refine risk prediction models. Interventions targeting high-risk subgroups (e.g., irradiated patients, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations) should prioritize cardioprotective strategies (e.g., statins, lifestyle modifications). Community-level initiatives to address healthcare access disparities, particularly for Black and uninsured groups, are equally critical to mitigate biological and structural CVD risks [21, 22].

By bridging oncology and cardiology disciplines, future efforts may reduce the dual burden of cancer and CVD, ultimately improving long-term outcomes for TC survivors.

Conclusion

This study underscores the imperative to integrate cardiovascular risk surveillance into survivorship care for TC patients, particularly those exposed to radiotherapy or experiencing social vulnerability. The multidimensional determinants of CVD-related mortality – spanning treatment toxicity, tumor biology, and sociodemographic disparities – highlight the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between oncology and cardiology. Future efforts should prioritize mechanistic research and equity-focused interventions to mitigate the dual burden of cancer and cardiovascular disease in this population.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
CI	Confidence Interval
CVD	Cardiovascular Disease
NCI	National Cancer Institute
SEER	Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results
SMR	Standardized Mortality Ratio
TC	Tongue Cancer

Competing interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest.

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