Aim: Lung cancer in elderly patients is an increasingly common problem for the oncology practitioner. In spite of the fact that platinum-based doublets are considered the standard therapy for patients with advanced non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC), the best treatment for elderly patients is still debated. The aim of this retrospective single center study was to evaluate the clinical features and the efficacy of platinum-based therapy specifically for elderly patients with metastatic NSCLC.

Methods: We retrospectively reviewed 48 metastatic NSCLC in patients aged 65 years or older, who were treated with platinum-based therapy as first-line treatment, from April 2007 to December 2012 in Hassan II University Hospital of Fez, Morocco.

Results: The mean age was 72.7 years (range 65 to 90). Performance status was 0-1 in 63.7% of cases and 2-3 in 20.4%. Sex ratio male/female was 3.8. Histological type of NSCLC was squamous cell carcinoma (62.5%) and adenocarcinoma (37.5%). 47.9% of patients had more than one site of metastasis. Patients received bi-chemotherapy based on cisplatin (43.8%) or carboplatin (56.2%) in combination with a third generation drug. The median number of cycles was 2.5 [1-6]. The objective response rate was 33.5%. The side effects of chemotherapy were hematologic toxicity (30.3%), sensory neuropathy (21%) and vomiting (23.5%). Grade III-IV toxicities occurred in 11.7% of cases. After a median follow up of 13 months [3-36], median overall survival was 7.1 months, and median progression free survival was 5.6 months.

Conclusions: This retrospective study showed that platinum based chemotherapy is viable option in fit elderly patients with NSCLC, and should be considered for effective anticancer treatment whenever possible. However, to guide clinical management of these patients, prospective and larger trials are needed.

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