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## **No change in the prevalence and in the clinical pattern of acral-lentiginous melanoma during the past 37 years: a retrospective review of 154 cases**

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**Introduction:** Acral-lentiginous melanoma (ALM) occurs on the palms, soles, or subungual skin. It is often detected late, because of its hidden localization and various clinical appearance.

**Aim:** To analyze ALM cases treated at our institute and compare data to international literature.

**Material and Methods:** We conducted a retrospective review between 1976 and 2013. Data from ALM patients were collected regarding to demography, primary tumor (localization, Breslow thickness, Clark level), sentinel lymph node (SLN) status and clinical stage. Prognostic factors were determined by statistical methods, survival rates by Kaplan-Meier analysis.

**Results:** During the 37 years 4593 patients were diagnosed with cutaneous melanoma, out of them 154 (3.35 %) proved to be ALM. The mean age at diagnosis was 65.3 years. 52.59 % of the patients waited more than one year to consult a physician. The mean tumor thickness was 3.905 mm, 75.84 % of the tumors were thicker than 2.00 mm. Compared to literature data on Caucasian patients, we found significantly higher tumor thickness. SLN biopsy was performed in one-third of the patients, 62 % of them were positive, which was associated with a significant higher tumor thickness and worse survival. Patients with ALM had 5- and 10-year overall survival rates of 61.8 % and 42.7 %, which proved to be significantly lower compared to literature data for other subtypes of melanoma. We found no significant change during the analyzed period in the number of diagnosed cases per year, patient's age at diagnosis and Breslow tumor thickness.

**Conclusion:** We confirmed that in ALM Breslow tumor thickness and SLN positivity are important prognostic factors for survival. We found that prevalence and major clinical characteristics do not change in this subtype. Our patients seek medical help after long period of time, when their disease has advanced. For a better survival we consider it essential to improve patients' awareness and to emphasize the importance of early diagnosis.

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