MO26-4
The impact and emerging issues of confirmation of chemotherapy regimen by a pharmacist in our breast oncology

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Objective: Intravenous drug therapy is the mainstay of breast cancer pharmacotherapy, and due to introductions of novel drugs and biomarkers into clinical practice, various therapeutic regimens have been introduced into daily clinical practice. Although the introduction of electronic medical record (EMR) has improved in terms of avoiding human errors such as overdoses or misrecognition of wash-out period, other human errors may occur mainly in delay in updating data, such as patient’s body weight update, hepatitis virus screening, regular evaluation of cardiac function, and dose modification according to toxicity grade. While with the aim of reducing those human errors, double-checking has been conducted in our team, to obtain further safety, we have started regimen-check by a faculty pharmacist of our department since April 2022.

Method: Based on the appointment list, a faculty pharmacist confirms if the same regimen has been registered as the physician in charge had ordered in EMR, if the contents are acceptable from the pharmacological point of view, and the dates of necessary tests and weigh-ins, etc. We examined retrospectively the frequency of human error and the content of questionable referrals in the regimens entered from July to September 2022.

Result: There were 873 regimens included, of which 40 (4.6%) regimens were unregistered electronically and 3 regimens were registered different regimens (0.36%). In one case, cardiac function was impaired and treatment was discontinued on the day of treatment. Two regimens were dosed based on weight several years ago, and two regimens required dose adjustments due to weight change. In addition, the proposal for fractional adjustment of drugs was proactively implemented to reduce drug disposal.

Conclusion: Regimens were modified at a certain frequency. This experience suggests that interventions by pharmacists may be useful for safer breast cancer pharmacotherapy practice and helpful for building a better system.