

The SpaTemp cohort: 168 nondysplastic Barrett's esophagus surveillance patients with and without progression to early neoplasia to evaluate the distribution of biomarkers over space and time

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SUMMARY. The ReBus cohort is a matched nested case–control cohort of patients with nondysplastic (ND) Barrett's esophagus (BE) at baseline who progressed (progressors) or did not progress (nonprogressors) to high-grade dysplasia (HGD) or cancer. This cohort is constructed using the most stringent inclusion criteria to optimize explorative studies on biomarkers predicting malignant progression in NDBE. These explorative studies may benefit from expanding the number of cases and by incorporating samples that allow assessment of the biomarker over space (spatial variability) and over time (temporal variability). To (i) update the ReBus cohort by identifying new progressors and (ii) identify progressors and nonprogressors within the updated ReBus cohort containing spatial and temporal information. The ReBus cohort was updated by identifying Barrett's patients referred for endoscopic work-up of neoplasia at 4 tertiary referral centers. Progressors and nonprogressors with a multilevel (spatial) endoscopy and additional prior (temporal) endoscopies were identified to evaluate biomarkers over space and over time. The original ReBus cohort consisted of 165 progressors and 723 nonprogressors. We identified 65 new progressors meeting the same strict selection criteria, resulting in a total number of 230 progressors and 723 matched nonprogressors in the updated ReBus cohort. Within the updated cohort, 61 progressors and 107 nonprogressors (mean age 61 ± 10 years) with a spatial endoscopy (median level 3 [2–4]) were identified. 33/61 progressors and 50/107 nonprogressors had a median of 3 (2–4) additional temporal endoscopies. Our updated ReBus cohort consists of 230 progressors and 723 matched nonprogressors using the most strict selection criteria. In a subgroup of 168 Barrett's patients (the SpaTemp cohort), multiple levels have been sampled at baseline and during follow-up providing a unique platform to study spatial and temporal distribution of biomarkers in BE.

KEY WORDS: Barrett's Esophagus, Esophageal Adenocarcinoma, Risk Stratification, Biomarker, Spatial, Temporal.

INTRODUCTION

Patients with Barrett's esophagus (BE) undergo endoscopic surveillance to detect esophageal adenocarcinoma (EAC) at an early and curable stage.^{1,2}

However, endoscopic surveillance has several limitations, since it is subject to biopsy sampling error, histological evaluation of biopsies is subjective and the yearly cumulative risk of progression to EAC of 0.6% is low.³ Objective biomarkers, which risk stratify

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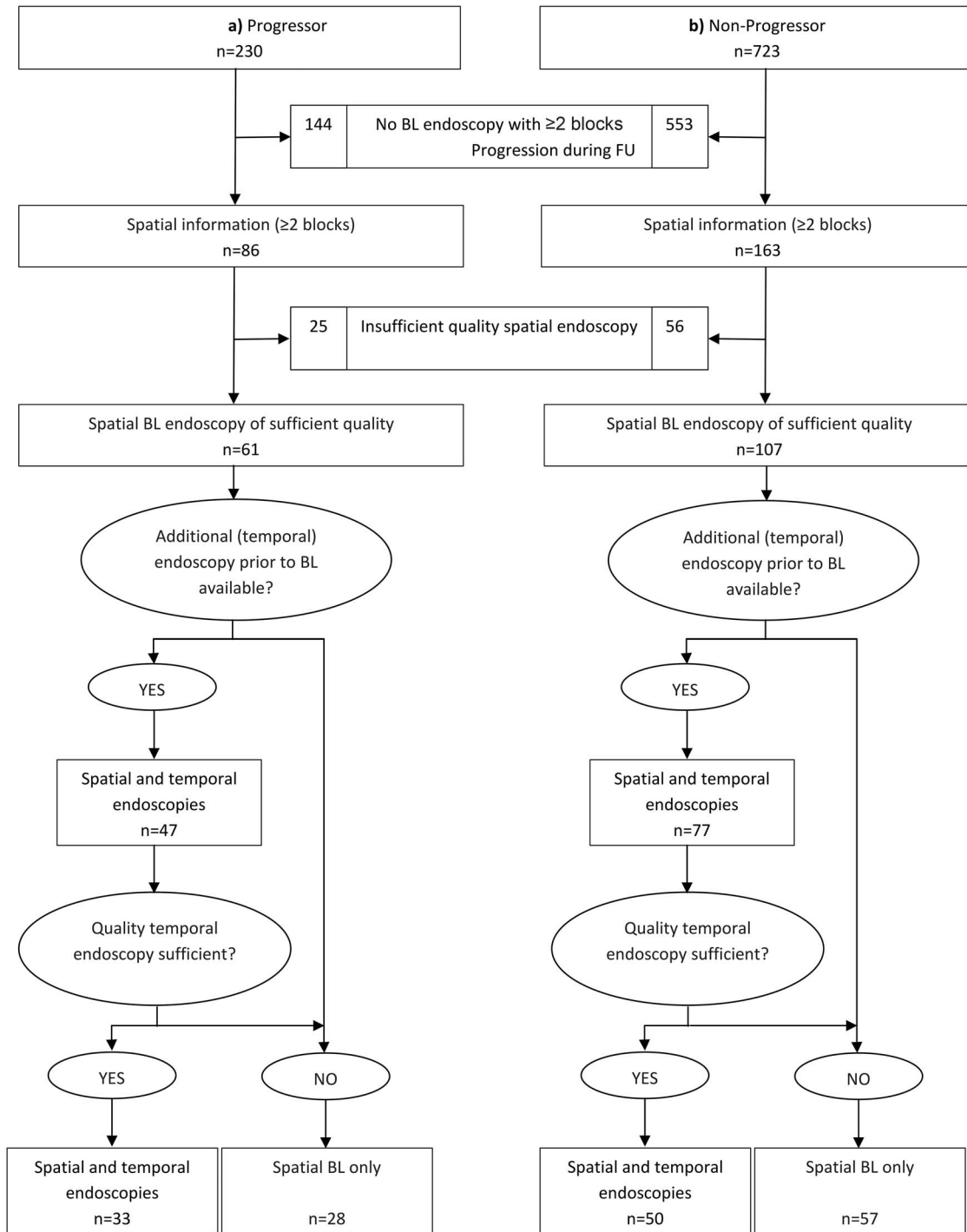


Fig. 2 Flowchart illustrating the selection of (a) progressors (P) and (b) nonprogressors (NP) eligible for biomarker research to evaluate spatial and/or temporal distribution based on the updated ReBus cohort.

endoscopies had a median BE length of 5 (IQR 4,7) and 3 (IQR 2,4) biopsy levels per endoscopy.

'Temporal' endoscopies. In 33/61 progressors with a spatial BL endoscopy, a total of 244 additional temporal endoscopies prior to the baseline endoscopy were available, from which 118 were of sufficient quality. Per patient, a median of 3 (IQR 2,4) temporal endoscopies were of sufficient quality (median biopsy

index 0.8 [IQR 0.5, 1.0]) and therefore included in the study cohort.

Nonprogressors SpaTemp cohort

The selection of nonprogressors eligible for the SpaTemp cohort is depicted in Figure 2b, demographics in Table 2a and b.

Table 3 Summary of published studies testing biomarkers in multiple levels and/or time points

Reference	Study setting and biopsy material	Sample size cases: controls	Investigated biomarker(s)	Spatial evaluation		Temporal evaluation				
				Evaluated levels	Quality sufficient (BI)	Results	TP tested	Quality sufficient (BI)	FU	Results
Li <i>et al.</i> ¹⁵	Seattle Barrett's esophagus study Tertiary referral, prospective cohort Fresh frozen biopsies	248 (79:169)	Changes in somatic copy number alterations (SCA)	1q2cm 1 biopsy per level P: mean 3.1 levels NP mean 2.4 levels	No (0.25)	P: Large genomic diversity within 48 months before progression NP: Small genomic diversity	2	No (0.25)	NA	P: Increasing chromosome instability and SCA followed by catastrophic genome doublings <48 months before progression NP: Low and stable levels of SCA over time
Li <i>et al.</i> ¹⁶	248 (79:169)	Using 5 types of SCA changes a 1 biopsy per level model with 29 chromosomal features was developed	1q2cm P: mean 3.1 levels NP: mean 2.4 levels	No (0.25)	All levels 1 time point, AUC = 0.94,	2	No (0.25)	NA	All levels 2 time points, AUC = 0.94	NA
Martinez <i>et al.</i> ¹⁷	Seattle Barrett's esophagus study Tertiary referral, prospective cohort Fresh frozen biopsies/surgical resection specimen	8 (4:4)	Changes in SCA, genome doubling	3 levels from a 1q2cm protocol	No (0.25)	P: Increasing genomic divergence toward GEJ NP: Low genomic divergence independent of geographical location in Barrett's segment	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cotton <i>et al.</i> ¹⁸	Posthoc-analysis of two RCT's (SURF/ AIM-Dysplasia)	157 patients (n cases and controls unknown)	Low-grade dysplasia (LGD)	SURF trial: 4q1-2 cm AIM trial: 4q1-2 cm	(1.0)	Increased prevalence of LGD in proximal most quarter (+22.6%) versus most distal quarter	2	NA	NA	NA
Nwachokor <i>et al.</i> ⁸	Tertiary referral, prospective cohort Formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded biopsies	20 (0:20)	DNA aneuploidy, K167, Mem2, Cyclin A, Cyclin D1	3 levels from a 4q1-2 cm protocol	NA	Variability btw 3 levels, 2 —Aneuploidy: 6.8–7.9%—K167: 25–29%—MCM2: 4.7–11%—Cyclin D1: 20–91.5%—Cyclin A: 8.3–21.9%	2	NA	Yes, mean 6.4 years	Variability btw 3 levels, —Aneuploidy: 7.0–8.1%—K167: 5.3–7.7%—MCM2: 54.3–71.7%—Cyclin D1: 11.9–69.7%—Cyclin A: 0–32%
Current study	Population-based nested case-control Formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded biopsies	168 (61:107)	—	>2 levels, 4q2cm protocol	Yes (>0.5)	—	≥2	Yes (>0.5)	Yes, ≥5 years	—

AUC, area under the ROC curve; biopsy index (BI) LGD, low-grade dysplasia; NP, nonprogressors; P, progressors; RCT, randomized controlled trial; SCA, somatic copy number alterations.

high-quality surveillance endoscopy 3 years after the spatial BL endoscopy, proving both endoscopic and histological absence of progression. This avoids irregular high hazard ratios by missed prevalent neoplasia in the tested nonprogressor samples.

Cotton *et al.* evaluated data of the spatial distribution of low-grade dysplasia (LGD) of the baseline endoscopy in progressors and nonprogressors from two large randomized controlled trials.^{18–20} An increased prevalence of LGD in the most proximal quarter (+22.6%) compared with the most distal quarter underlined the importance of assessing biomarkers at multiple levels. The strict sampling protocol in both trials guaranteed a sufficient number of biopsies evaluated per endoscopic level, similar to the biopsy index in our collected cohort. However, this study only evaluated the histological diagnosis as provided per level and did not reassess the actual samples nor did the authors have access to the corresponding tissue blocks. This logically renders any additional biomarker testing impossible. In contrast, all formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded (FFPE) tissue blocks included in the SpaTemp cohort have been retrieved from a total of 58 hospitals in the Netherlands and are available for biomarker analysis, with informed consent from all participating patients. These unique circumstances make a head-to-head comparison of different biomarkers on the same patient material possible and allows to determine the biomarker (or a combination of markers) with the best performance.

The group of Nwachokor *et al.* evaluated three levels of biopsies over two serial endoscopies in nondysplastic BE patients without progression to HGD/EAC.⁸ Based on both image cytometry and immunohistochemistry, a high variability over space (5–92%) and time (0–77%) was described for the four markers Ki67, Mcm2, cyclin A, and cyclin D1. In contrast, a low variability of 6.8–7.9% over space and 7.0–8.1% over time was observed for aneuploidy. These results are of special interest, since this study evaluated only patients *without* progression to cancer. Logically, it may be assumed that an even more significant variability can be expected in patients *with* progression to cancer. The high number of 61 progressors in the SpaTemp cohort ensures a sufficient number of events to develop and validate models, which accurately risk stratify BE patients into low- and high-risk for progression. The outcomes can subsequently be tested in the remaining 165 progressors and 616 nonprogressors in the ReBus cohort who did not need the strict ‘multiple level-multiple endoscopy’ selection criteria of the SpaTemp cohort yet who meet all strict selection criteria of the ReBus cohort.

Our study has a number of limitations. First, the retrospective design of the study may have resulted

in selection bias. However, it did allow us to apply stringent inclusion criteria.

Additionally, due to the retrospective design biopsy specimens were not always obtained strictly according to the Seattle biopsy protocol. Therefore, we only selected patients in which at least 50% of the biopsies as required per Seattle protocol were available to guarantee adequate sampling quality of the baseline endoscopy.

In conclusion, the ReBus cohort and the SpaTemp subcohort are a unique platform for biomarker studies in Barrett’s esophagus. Compared to other studies, the number of progressors, the strict selection criteria, and the use of FFPE samples are important advantages. The availability of all tissue blocks with corresponding informed consent provide the opportunity to evaluate and validate multiple biomarkers on the same samples and to determine the ideal sampling technique and the predictive window by testing samples obtained from multiple levels and at multiple time points.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Supplementary data mentioned in the text are available to subscribers in *DOTESO* online.

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