

Short-term efficacy of surgery combined with intrapleural perfusion with hyperthermic chemotherapy in NSCLC patients with MPE

Fan Chen, Zhilin Luo, Hong Zhang, Tianhu Wang*

Abstract

Backgrounds: To investigate the short-term efficacy and safety of surgery combined with intrapleural perfusion with hyperthermic chemotherapy (IPHC) in non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) patients with malignant pleural effusion (MPE).

Methods: A total of 54 NSCLC patients with MPE were enrolled (26 in treatment group vs 28 in the control group). The patients in the treatment group underwent surgery combined with 3 IPHC for 60 minutes each time. The control group was treated with traditional intrathoracic perfusion.

Results: The control rate of pleural effusion at 4 weeks, 2 months and 3 months in the treatment group was 92.31%, 84.21% and 83.33%; the rate in the control group was 42.86%, 50.00% and 38.89% ($P < 0.05$). The improvement rate of karnofsky performance status (KPS) score in the treatment group (80.77%) was higher than that in the control group (46.43%) ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusions: The short-term effect of surgery combined with IPHC is effective and safe in the treatment of NSCLC patients with MPE.

Keywords: intrapleural perfusion with hyperthermic chemotherapy; video-assisted thoracoscopy surgery; lung cancer; malignant pleural effusion

1. Introduction

Malignant pleural effusion (MPE) is a common clinical issue in patients with primary chest malignancy and thoracic metastatic malignancies. MPE is one of symptoms in multiple cancer sites such as lung cancer (LC), breast cancer, and lymphoma[1]. At present, LC has become the third leading cause of death in China, following stroke and ischemic heart disease[2] and it is also the most common cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide[3]. Although most LC patients without obvious symptoms could be found using physical examination, some patients with LC lost the best time of surgery because it turns out to be mid or late stage at the time of first visit[4]. The advanced LC patients are often accompanied with MPE, which is often manifested in progressively worsened dyspnea, chest pain, and dry cough, even leading to the end-sitting breathing and cyanosis, which seriously affect the quality of life and survival time of patients. The prognosis of these patients is

extremely poor, with a median survival of only a few months [5], and adenocarcinoma is the most common pathological types in these patients[6]. Thus, people pay more attention to the treatment of LC with MPE. The effective control of MPE can alleviate the clinical symptoms of patients, improve the quality of life of patients, and prolong the survival period of patients.

Hyperthermia combined with chemotherapy has a synergistic sensitization effect, which has a more significant clinical effect on MPE than chemotherapy alone and hyperthermia alone. It is now used for the treatment of malignant tumors, such as malignant pleural diseases, malignant ascites, ovarian cancer, advanced gastric cancer, bladder cancer, etc[7-10]. This retrospective study will provide practical evidence for the short-term efficacy and safety of uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC in NSCLC patients with MPE.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Patients' general information

The clinical data of 54 NSCLC patients with MPE from May 2016 to December 2019 were retrospectively analyzed. The patients were all from

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the electronic medical record system of the Third Affiliated Hospital of Chongqing Medical University(Gener Hospital) and Yiduyun system (222.180.236.22). The IPHC treatment protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of The Third Affiliated Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, and all patients signed surgery and IPHC informed consent prior to treatment and were performed by the same surgical team. Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) patients with MPE of NSCLC were diagnosed by pathological/histological/cytological confirmation; (2) sufficient blood routine, liver function, renal function and cardiorespiratory function; (3) karnofsky performance status (KPS) more than 60(these patients with good physical condition to tolerance treatment). Exclusion criteria were as follows: (1)except for malignant lung lesions, tumor lesions in other organs throughout the body [11];(2) patients with severe pleural adhesions on the affected side of the chest;(3) patients with bleeding disorders and bleeding tendency. According to different treatment plans, 54 patients included were divided into two groups (26 in treatment group vs 28 in control group). There was no significant difference between the two groups in age, gender, pathological type and other general data ($P > 0.05$) (Table 1).

2.2 Treatment method

2.2.1 Treatment group

All patients underwent uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC after they underwent an effective and complete pre-treatment assessment, including the chest and abdomen computed tomography, pulmonary function tests, electrocardiogram, the brain magnetic resonance imaging.

Surgery procedure

We performed a uniportal(shown in supplementary Fig.1.) video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery which underwent under general anesthesia and were ventilated by double-lumen endotracheal tubes in the operating room. The basic vital signs such as blood pressure, breathing, pulse, oxygen saturation and the urine volume were continuously monitored during the operation. The patient was in a lateral position. An 3cm-5cm incision which protected by the incision protective sheath was made in the 4th or 5th intercostal level between the anterior iliac crest and the midline of the axillary. Video-assisted thoracoscopic thoracic exploration was carried out along this port, such as the degree of pleural

adhesion and the degree of tumor involvement, as far as possible to separate the pleural adhesions and peel off the pulmonary surface fiberboard, and then removed the primary lesion by wedge resections or lobectomies , and removed pleural metastases by pleurectomy as much as possible. All the thoracoscopic instruments were removed after thoracoscopic exploration was confirmed no active hemorrhage and pulmonary air leakage, then two 26F thoracic drainage tubes were placed in the pleural cavity via the port(shown in supplementary Fig.2.). One tube was placed at the coastal diaphragm angle and the other at the top of the pleura(shown in supplementary Fig.3.) so that the in-vivo hyperthermic perfusion treatment system(BR-TRG-I) could be connected with the two drainage tubes to implement IPHC postoperatively. The thoracic drainage tubes were fixed on the chest wall with 7 silk thread and connected to a water-sealed bottle respectively.

IPHC

We performed the BR-TRG-I developed by Guangzhou Baorui Medical Technology Co., Ltd. The patients underwent IPHC in the special room for IPHC from the 1st postoperative day with the patient awake. Before IPHC, oxygen inhalation, ECG and oxygen saturation were monitored. Meanwhile, sedation and analgesia treatment were given. Connected the two red ports of the treatment pipeline to the inlet and blue ports to the outlet. The storage bag was reached 1000 ml by the liquid, then preheating was started at the fastest speed of 600 ml/min, and the air in the heat exchanger was exhausted. When the preheating temperature reached 40 °C, the treatment began. At the end of the perfusion, the fluid in the pleural cavity was discharged as completely as possible. IPHC treatment was performed 3 times. The temperature during the treatment was controlled at 46°C—48°C. The time of each treatment was 60 minutes and the interval was 24 hours. Chemotherapeutic drugs were administered according to intravenous chemotherapy dosage, and the isotonic saline was used in an amount of 3000 ml (adjusted according to the specific conditions). IPHC medication regimen: isotonic saline + cisplatin (75 mg/m² [12])/ gemcitabine (1250 mg/m², squamous cell carcinoma[13]) / docetaxel (75mg/m², adenocarcinoma[13]) (Platinum is used interchangeably with gemcitabine/docetaxel).

2.2.2 Control group

The group was only treated with traditional

intrathoracic perfusion. After B-ultrasound localization, closed thoracic drainage was performed to completely drain the pleural effusion, and cisplatin was injected into the chest cavity. Instruct the patient to change position frequently.

2.3 Evaluation index

2.3.1 MPE control rate

The changes of MPE in patients at 4 weeks, 2 months and 3 months after treatment were evaluated by chest CT. (1) complete response (CR): the effusion disappeared completely, the symptoms disappeared, no fluid accumulated and stabilized for more than 4 weeks; (2) partial response (PR): effusion reduction more than 50%, symptom improvement, no growth of residual effusion for 4 weeks; (3) stable disease (SD): less than 50% reduction in fluid accumulation; (4) progression disease (PD): increased MPE or worsening symptoms. $MPE\ control\ rate = \{ (CR + PR) / \text{number of patients in each group} \} \times 100\%$ [14].

2.3.2 The improvement rate of KPS score

The physical condition of the patients was evaluated 4 weeks after treatment. According to the KPS score standard [15], the score increased more than 20 points compared with before treatment was significantly effective, the score increased more than 10 points was effective, the score increased less than 10 points or no change was stable, and the decreased score was invalid. $The\ improvement\ rate\ of\ KPS\ score = \{ (significantly\ effective + effective) / (\text{number of patients in each group}) \} \times 100\%$.

2.3.3 Serum carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) level

The changes of serum CEA in the treatment group were compared between 4 weeks after treatment and before treatment (The CEA level was significantly higher in metastatic of NSCLC patients [16]).

2.3.4 Adverse reactions

(1) in the course of IPHC, whether patients in the treatment group suffered from discomfort including decreased oxygen saturation, higher body temperature, chest pain and chest tightness; (2) whether there were harmful effects on blood routine, liver and kidney function before and after treatment in the treatment group; (3) whether there were pulmonary interstitial changes in two groups; (4) whether patients suffered from nausea and vomiting after IPHC in two groups.

2.4 Statistics

Continuous variable data were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation ($\bar{x} \pm SD$). If the normal distribution was consistent, the data was compared with the *t*-test of the paired sample. If the normal distribution was not met, the non-parametric test was used. The categorical variables were expressed in terms of frequency and percentage, and the Pearson χ^2 test was used for comparison between groups. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 24 (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 24.0; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). $P < 0.05$ indicates that the difference was statistically significant.

3. Results

3.1 MPE control rate

The MPE control rate was 92.31% (24/26) in the treatment group at 4 weeks after treatment (shown in supplementary Fig. 4, 5.). In the treatment group, 19 patients survived for more than 3 months, except 3 patients who lost the follow-up and 2 patients whose follow-up time was less than 2 months, and the MPE control rate was 84.21% (16/19) at 2 months after treatment. The MPE control rate was 83.33% (15/18) at 3 months after treatment except 1 patient whose follow-up time was less than 3 months. The MPE control rate was 42.86% (12/28) in the control group at 4 weeks after treatment. In the control group, 18 patients survived for more than 3 months, except 6 patients who lost the follow-up and 1 patient whose follow-up time was less than 2 months, and the MPE control rate was 50.00% (9/18) at 2 months after treatment. The MPE control rate was 38.89% (7/18) in the control group at 3 months after treatment. There was significant difference in the MPE control rate between the two groups at 4 weeks, 2 months and 3 months after treatment ($P < 0.05$) (Table 2).

3.2 The improvement rate of KPS score

The improvement rate of KPS score in the treatment group was 80.77% (21/26), which was significantly higher than that in the control group 46.43% (13/28). The difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$) (Table 3).

3.3 Serum CEA level

The serum CEA level in the treatment group before treatment was 75.57 ± 148.71 ng/ml, and it decreased to 43.19 ± 82.46 ng/ml after 4 weeks followed with treatment ($P < 0.05$).

3.4 Adverse reactions

In the treatment group, 78 times of IPHC were performed. During the IPHC process, the number of

adverse reactions such as increased body temperature, decreased oxygen saturation, chest pain and chest tightness was 10, with an incidence of 12.82% (Table 4). There were some changes in the blood routine, liver, and kidney function between before and after treatment. The difference of WBC and Cr were statistically significant (Table 5). There were 3 cases with pulmonary interstitial changes in the treatment group and 0 cases in the control group ($P < 0.05$). And 3 cases of gastrointestinal reaction occurred in the treatment group and 10 occurred in the control group ($P < 0.05$) (Table 6).

4. Discussion

The innovations of this study are as follows: first, uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC is a relatively new treatment model, which can reduce intrathoracic tumors in a minimally invasive manner, and control the toxicity and side effects of chemotherapy drugs in the lowest possible range; second, this mode can improve the control efficiency of pleural effusion in NSCLC patients with MPE, improve the quality of life of patients, and provide opportunities for subsequent comprehensive treatment; third, it may provide more effective treatment for more NSCLC patients with MPE.

The development of MPE is mainly related to the following mechanisms: (1) Malignant tumors undergo extensive pleural metastasis, which destroys the walls of pleural capillaries and increases pleural effusion; (2) Obstruction of lymphatic ducts and metastasis of the mediastinal lymph nodes cause obstruction to the return of exudate; (3) Tumor cells decompose in the thoracic cavity to produce a large amount of protein, which increases the colloid osmotic pressure in the pleural cavity, thereby increasing the exudation of pleural effusion; (4) The invasion of the pleura by a malignant tumor causes an inflammatory response to the pleura, which increases the permeability of the capillary. NSCLC patients with MPE or pleural metastasis are classified as stage IV LC (M1a) and have lost the opportunity for surgical treatment. The median survival time is only about 4 months, and more than 80% are adenocarcinoma[17]. At present, the main clinical methods are thoracentesis drainage to relieve symptoms, pleural fixation, intraperitoneal injection of chemotherapeutic drugs or biological immune agents, pleurotomy and other treatment methods. Studies have shown that the effective rate of pleural fluid control by sclerosing agent, cisplatin,

interleukin-2, bevacizumab, etc. into the chest cavity is 52% to 80%[18-21]. A meta analysis has shown that Endostar could be an effective agent for controlling MPE[22]. Most do not achieve the desired effectiveness of MPE control rate. IPHC combines hyperthermia on the basis of simple intracavitary chemotherapy, which greatly improves the efficacy of chemotherapy alone and controls the MPE more effectively. Normal human tissue cells can withstand 60 minutes at 47°C, however, tumor cells can be killed at the temperature of 43°C for 60 minutes. Hyperthermia increases the concentration of intracavitary chemotherapy drugs[23], improve the toxicity and efficacy of chemotherapy and drug penetration[24-25]. Intracavitary hyperthermic perfusion chemotherapy allows the local high dose of drugs and less systemic toxicity [26]. The BR-TRG-I achieves the perfect integration of temperature control, temperature measurement and flow control. The accuracy of temperature measurement and temperature control of the system is $\pm 0.1^\circ\text{C}$ and $\pm 0.2^\circ\text{C}$ respectively. The residual cancer cells in the cavity can be washed and filtered mechanically.

This study investigated the short-term efficacy and safety of uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC in the treatment of NSCLC patients with MPE. The surgery procedures were finished under thoracoscopy through only one 30mm-50mm port incision, which minimized the trauma of surgery to the patient. Through thoracoscopy surgery, pleural effusion elimination and fiberboard exfoliation are achieved to promote lung recruitment, thereby improving the pulmonary functions. Combined with IPHC after surgery, the thermal effect and the penetration ability of chemotherapeutic drugs are used to maximize the removal of residual cancer cells in the thoracic cavity, so as to improve the efficiency of pleural fluid control, improve the quality of life of patients, and provide opportunities for follow-up intravenous chemotherapy, targeting and other comprehensive treatment.

The results of this study showed that MPE control rate at 4 weeks, 2 months, and 3 months and the improvement rate of KPS in the treatment group were significantly higher than those in the control group ($P < 0.05$). In the treatment group, the incidence of adverse reactions such as increased body temperature and elevated blood pressure during the IPHC was 12.82%. There were statistically significant differences in WBC and Cr before and after treatment in the treatment group. The increase of white blood cells after treatment

was considered caused by post-operative stress. The Cr after treatment was lower than that before treatment, indicating that uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC did not increase the Cr in patients. There were no statistically significant differences in PLT, ALT, AST and BUN, indicating that uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC had no significant effect on patients' bone marrow suppression and liver and kidney function. The incidence of nausea and vomiting after the IPHC in the treatment group(3 patients) was less than that in the control group(10 patients) which caused by chemotherapeutic drugs were considered, but all of them were mild and relieved by the treatment of metoclopramide, Ondansetron and Omeprazole. The incidence of interstitial lung changes with the controllable condition is 11.54% which we considered that it was caused by IPHC in the lungs of patients with a slight air leak after the operation. After treatment with methylprednisolone in time, the interstitial changes in the lungs of the patients were effectively controlled. Our present study shows that the short-term effect of uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC has a reliable inhibitory effect on NSCLC patients with MPE and it is relatively safe.

Limitations of this study: (1) The potential source of selection bias may cause different result; (2)At present, due to the small number of cases, it is not possible to compare groupings such as pathological types. It is still necessary to continue to increase the sample size for further analysis. (3) Due to the short follow-up time of most patients, the three-year and five-year survival rate is currently lacking and the follow-up is still needed. But the short-term effect of uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy cytoreductive surgery combined with IPHC in the treatment of NSCLC patients with MPE is accurate and has certain clinical application value.

Statements

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Author Contributions

- (I) Conception and design: Fan Chen, Zhilin Luo, Hong Zhang
- (II) Administrative support: Tianhu Wang
- (III) Provision of study materials or patients: Fan Chen
- (IV) Collection and assembly of data: Fan Chen
- (V) Data analysis and interpretation: Fan Chen, Zhilin Luo, Hong Zhang
- (VI) Manuscript writing and Final approval: All authors

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Table 1. Clinical data of two groups of patients

Characteristics	Treatment group (n=26)	Control group (n=28)
Sex		
Male	19	16
Female	7	12
Age	61.23±11.10	63.18±10.22
Pathological type		
Squamous cell carcinoma	1	2
Adenocarcinoma	25	26
Smoking history		
Yes	13	15
No	13	13
KPS score		
100	0	0
90	2	4
80	14	18
70	5	5
60	5	1

Table 2. The MPE control in two groups[n(%)]

Groups	Time	CR	PR	SD	PD	Control rate	P
Treatment group (n=26)	4 weeks	8(30.77)	16(61.54)	0(0.00)	2(7.69)	24(92.31)	0.000
Control group (n=28)		1(3.57)	11(39.29)	6(21.43)	10(35.71)	12(42.86)	
Treatment group (n=26)	2 months	4(21.05)	12(63.16)	0(0.00)	3(15.79)	16(84.21)	0.033
Control group (n=28)		1(5.56)	8(44.44)	4(22.22)	5(27.78)	9(50.00)	
Treatment group (n=26)	3 months	4(22.22)	11(61.11)	0(0.00)	3(16.67)	15(83.33)	0.025
Control group (n=28)		1(5.56)	6(33.33)	4(22.22)	5(27.78)	7(38.89)	

Table 3. The improvement of KPS score in 4 weeks in two groups[n(%)]

Groups	Significantly effective	Effective	Stable	Invalid	Improvement rate	P
Treatment group (n=26)	6(23.08)	15(57.69)	3(11.54)	2(7.69)	21(80.77)	0.003
Control group (n=28)	0(0.00)	13(46.43)	6(21.43)	9(32.14)	13(46.43)	

Table 4. Adverse reactions during IPHC treatment in the treatment group

Adverse reactions	Persons	Incidence rate (100%)
Increased body temperature	1	1.28
Decreased oxygen saturation	5	6.41
Chest pain	2	2.56
Chest tightness	2	2.56
Total	10	12.82

Table 5. Blood routine, liver and kidney functions of patients in the treatment group before and after treatment

Index	Treatment group (n=26) Before treatment	After treatment	P
WBC($\times 10^9/L$)	8.30±4.16	10.03±3.41	0.004
PLT($\times 10^9/L$)	266.96±99.88	282.96±127.85	0.218
ALT(u/L)	31.65±26.79	35.27±27.22	0.286
AST(u/L)	25.65±11.28	27.54±13.28	0.909
BUN(mmol/L)	4.90±1.35	5.50±2.13	0.071
Cr(mmol/L)	66.77±21.25	60.46±25.74	0.011

Table 6. The occurrence of nausea , vomiting and pulmonary interstitial changes in two groups after treatment[n(%)]

Groups	nausea and vomiting	<i>P</i>	Pulmonary interstitial changes	<i>P</i>
Treatment group (n=26)	3(11.54)	0.038	3(11.54)	0.032
Control group (n=28)	10(35.71)		0(0.00)	

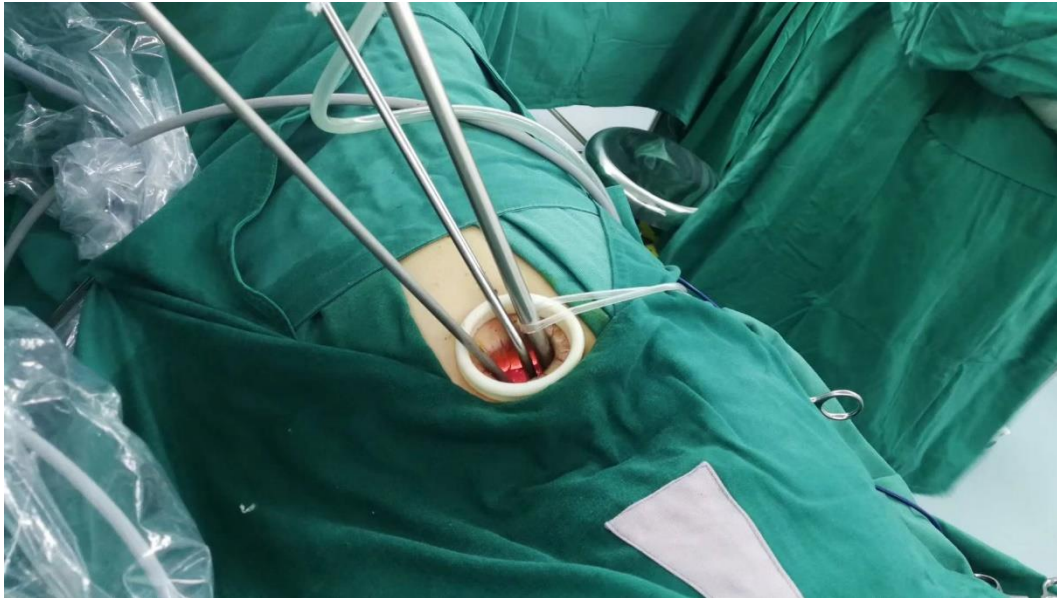
Figure Legends

Supplementary Fig. 1. The uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy minimally invasive cytoreductive surgery

Supplementary Fig. 2. Thoracic drainage tubes fixed at one port

Supplementary Fig. 3. Placement of the two thoracic drainage tubes in the thoracic cavity

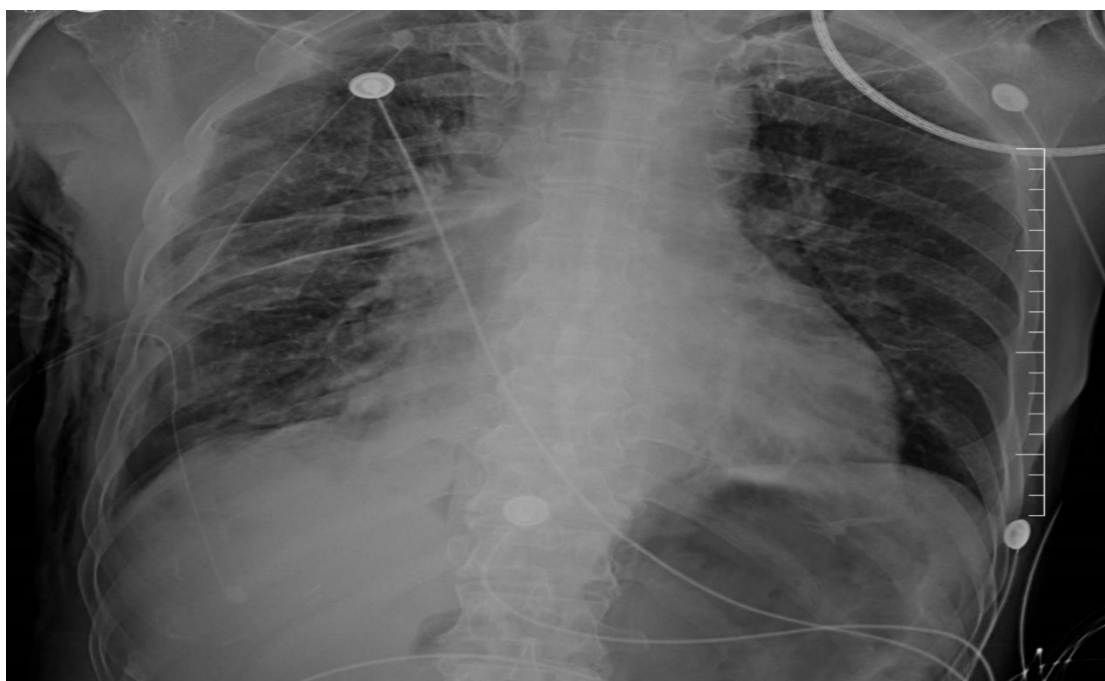
Supplementary Fig. 4,5. The chest CT of patient in the treatment group before and after treatment



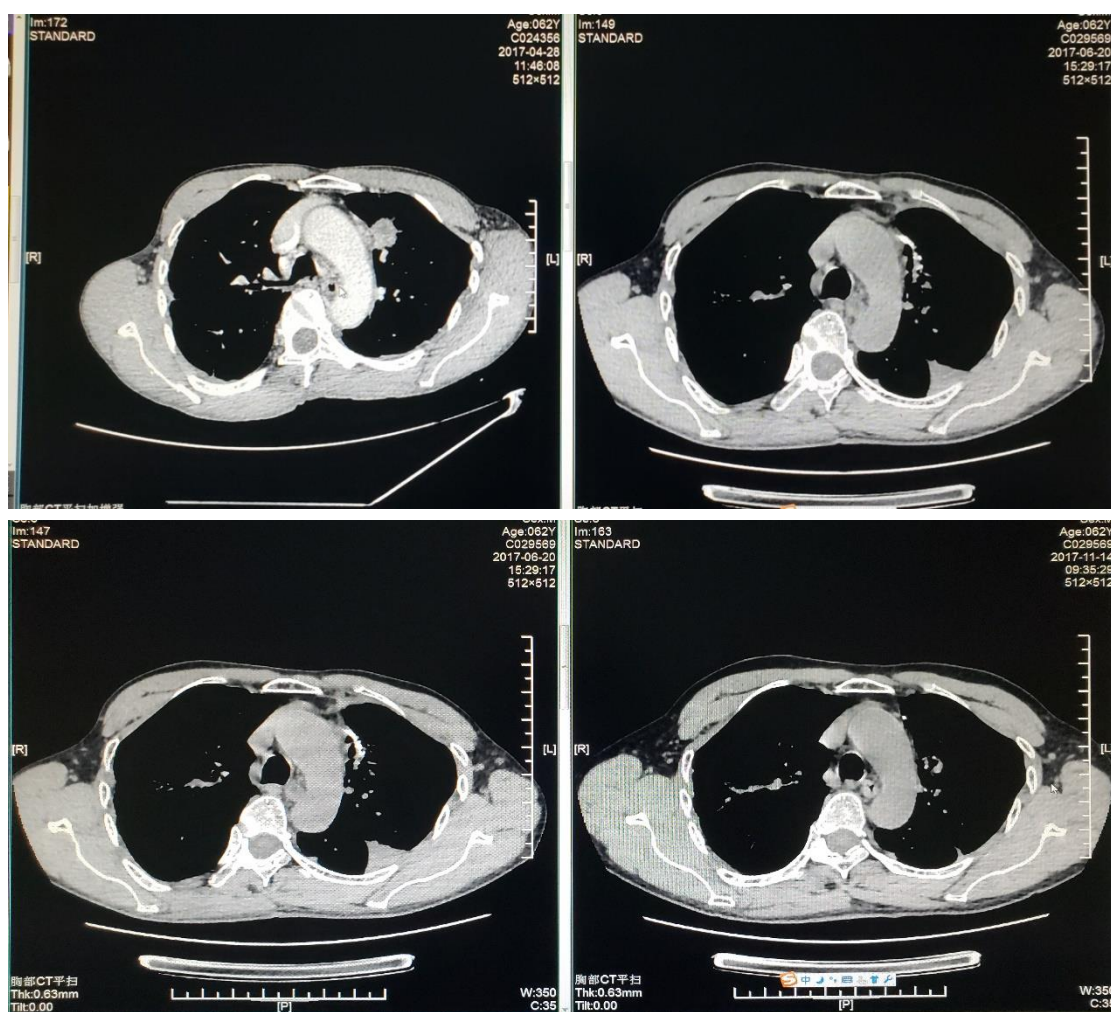
Supplementary Fig.1. **The uniportal video-assisted thoracoscopy minimally invasive cytoreductive surgery**



Supplementary Fig.2. **Thoracic drainage tubes fixed at one port**



Supplementary Figure 3. Placement of the two thoracic drainage tubes in the thoracic cavity



Supplementary Figure 4,5. The chest CT of patient in the treatment group before and after treatment