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Title: Refining EGFR-monoclonal antibody treatment in colorectal cancer

Issue Date: 2015-07-02



Chapter 7

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Submitted



*Effect of the Fc gamma receptor
polymorphism V158F status on the
survival of metastatic colorectal
cancer patients treated with
cetuximab: a meta-analysis*



Abstract

Background

The use of cetuximab in metastatic colorectal cancer (CRC) is limited to patients with wild type *KRAS* tumors and more recently to *RAS* wild type tumors only. Antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC), mediated by the Fc gamma receptor (FCGR) is assumed to be an important mechanism for induction of tumor cell death by cetuximab. Several studies explored the role of FCGR3A (rs396991) genetic polymorphism in cetuximab efficacy in mCRC patients, but the results from these studies are discordant.

Method

An individual patient data meta-analysis was performed, to better understand the effect of FCGR3A FF versus non FF (FV and VV) polymorphism on progression free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS) in patients with *KRAS* mutant or wild type metastatic CRC, treated with cetuximab. Three studies were included in this meta-analysis.

Results

The hazard ratio (HR) for the primary endpoint progression free survival for FCGR3A non FF, adjusted for *KRAS* and the interaction between FCGR3A and *KRAS* was equal to 1.07 (95% confidence interval 0.89 - 1.29, $p = 0.45$). For overall survival, the HR for FCGR3A non FF, adjusted for *KRAS* and the interaction between FCGR3A and *KRAS* was equal to 0.91 (95% confidence interval 0.77 - 1.07).

Conclusion

The results of the present analysis suggest that FCGR3A rs396991 is not associated with progression free or overall survival in cetuximab treated mCRC patients.

Introduction

Cetuximab is an IgG1-type chimeric monoclonal antibody (MoAb) that targets the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR). Cetuximab is mainly used for treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer. Blocking of EGFR results in decreased proliferation, cell survival and angiogenesis. However, about 40% of colorectal cancers harbor a mutation in *KRAS* and these tumors do not respond to anti-EGFR therapy[1-3]. For this reason, the use of cetuximab is limited to patients with wild type *KRAS* tumors and more recently to patients with *RAS* wild type tumors only[4].

Antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC), mediated by the Fc gamma receptor (FCGR) is assumed to be an important mechanism for induction of tumor cell death by cetuximab[5]. MoAbs are molecules of the IgG class and have an antigen-binding fragment (Fab) and a constant fragment (Fc). Fc gamma receptors (FCGRs) are expressed on immune effector cells, such as macrophages and natural killer lymphocytes. ADCC is induced when FCGRs bind to the monoclonal Fc fragment, since this interaction leads to the activation and degranulation of the effector cells and the subsequent lysis of the tumor[6].

Several germline single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP) in the *FCGR* gene have been identified that confer a different binding affinity of the FCGR to the Fc fragment of the MoAb. The polymorphism in the Fc gamma receptor 3A gene (*FCGR3A*) c.818A>C results in a change of phenylalanine (F) to valine (V) at position 158 (rs396991)[6,7]. The C allele coding for valine of *FCGR3A* has a much higher affinity for binding to Fc than the wild type A allele coding for phenylalanine. Importantly, the V phenotype has been related with a more extensive IgG1-induced ADCC[8,9]. Several studies, especially in large B-cell and follicular lymphoma patients treated with the MoAb rituximab, show a better clinical outcome for patients with *FCGR3A* VV phenotype, a finding that might be explained by the higher binding affinity conferred by this V phenotype[5,10-12].

The possible advantage of *FCGR3A* VV phenotype is less clear in mCRC patients treated with cetuximab. Indeed, the results from several studies investigating the association between *FCGR3A* genotype and cetuximab efficacy in mCRC patients are discordant (Table 1). A total of 13 published studies have investigated the association between *FCGR3A* and response, progression free or overall survival in mCRC patients treated with cetuximab. Seven studies[13-19] did not find any significant association between *FCGR3A* and outcome. The studies by Bibeau et al.[20] and Calemma et al.[21] reported that patients with the *FCGR3A* VV phenotype had a longer PFS. In contrast, four other studies reported a higher likelihood of cetuximab induced progression free or overall survival for patients with the *FCGR3A* F phenotype. In the study of Zhang et al.[22] a significantly higher response rate (RR) was seen in cetuximab plus bevacizumab treated patients with the FF group (RR = 56%) compared to FV (RR = 25%) and VV (RR = 8%) phenotypes. Dahan et al. [23] (58 patients) reported a decreased overall survival for patients with the *FCGR3A* VV phenotype whereas Pander et al. showed that the C allele coding for valine was associated with a shorter progression free survival[24]. Finally, a small study performed by Zhang et al. in 2007 with only 39 mCRC patients showed that those with the F-containing phenotype (FF or FV) had a longer PFS [31]. These conflicting results could be explained by a limited sample size of the different studies, genotyping errors (distribution of the genotypes is not always consistent with the Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium)[25-26] and different clinical scenarios.

As mentioned, most studies did have some drawbacks regarding the number of patients per study. The studies of Bibeau et al.[27], Zhang et al.[22] and Park et al.[28] reported genotype distributions of *FCGR3A* which deviated from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. Some of these

studies reported an altered outcome for the different *FCGR3A* genotypes, however, deviation from the Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium raises concerns in interpreting the outcome of these studies. All studies conducted retrospective analysis and positive/significant associations were found in relatively small patient cohorts, ranging from 32 to 270 patients. In these small studies many associations may have been studied and due to multiplicity, false positive associations may have occurred.

In an earlier study of our research group, the study of Pander et al.[24], we showed that the V-phenotype was associated with worse progression. In addition, in an *in vitro* study we showed that an extensive binding of *FCGR3A* with the C allele coding for valine, expressed by type 2 macrophages, resulted in the release of tumor promoting factors[29]. This effect of the *FCGR3A* genotype appeared independent of the *KRAS* mutation status of the tumor[24]. This preclinical finding, resulting in extensive release of tumor promoting factors after extensive binding by the C allele coding for V, was the basis to further investigate the association between *FCGR3A* polymorphisms, *KRAS* mutational status and survival. A dominant model was used to study the differences between *FCGR3A* wild type FF versus *FCGR3A* heterozygous mutant FV plus homozygous mutant VV. Interestingly, in both our preclinical study and the CAIRO2 study an effect of *FCGR3A* was seen independent of *KRAS* mutational status. Interestingly, the effect of the *FCGR3A* polymorphism was substantial and in patients with a *KRAS* mutant tumor and a favourable *FCGR3A* polymorphism survival was comparable to patients with a *KRAS* wild type tumor but unfavourable *FCGR3A* polymorphism. For this reason, we aimed to study the effect of the *FCGR3A* (rs396991) polymorphism in patients with *KRAS* wild type and mutant CRC despite the fact that cetuximab is nowadays only used in *RAS* wild type patients. Consequently, for our meta-analysis we selected studies in which patients were included with *KRAS* mutant and wild type tumors, performed at the time when the use of cetuximab was not yet restricted to (*K*) *RAS* wild type tumors.

We conducted an individual patient data meta-analysis combining 1,301 patients from three independent studies, to study and *FCGR3A* FF versus non FF (FV and VV) phenotypes on the progression free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS) of metastatic colorectal cancer in patients with a *KRAS* mutant or wild type tumors treated with cetuximab. The other studies were excluded due to unknown *KRAS* status, *KRAS* wild type patients only, genotyping method, missing survival data or inability to provide the data.

Table 1: Overview of previous published studies, which studied the association between *FCGR3A* polymorphisms and cetuximab response in metastatic colorectal cancer.

Study	Patients	Distribution of <i>FCGR3A</i> phenotypes ¹	Treatment	<i>KRAS</i> status of tumor	Results
Zhang et al. 2007	39	FF: 16 FV: 14 VV: 5 $X^2 = 0.44$ $p = 0.51$	cetuximab	Unknown	Patients with any F phenotype showed favourable response (median PFS 3.7 vs. 1.1 months $p = 0.004$).
Graziano et al. 2008	110	FF: 38 FV: 50 VV: 22 $X^2 = 0.56$ $p = 0.45$	Irinotecan + cetuximab	Whole population	No association found on progression free or overall survival.
Bibeau et al. 2009	68	FF: 15 FV: 43 VV: 10 $X^2 = 5.02$ $P = 0.03$	Irinotecan + cetuximab	Whole population and subgroup analysis in <i>KRAS</i> wild type and <i>KRAS</i> mutant	VV phenotype associated with longer PFS. VV phenotype 6.9 months vs. FV or VV phenotype 3.2 months in whole population. VV phenotype 5.5 months vs. FV or VV phenotype 2.8 months in <i>KRAS</i> mutant patients
Zhang et al. 2010	31	FF: 11 FV: 9 VV: 11 $X^2 = 5.45$ $p = 0.02$	Cetuximab + bevacizumab + Irinotecan	In whole population	No association found on response rate.
	32	FF: 10 FV: 12 VV: 12 $X^2 = 2.89$ $p = 0.09$	Cetuximab + bevacizumab	Independent of <i>KRAS</i> status. Effect seen in whole population and <i>KRAS</i> wild type patients.	FF associated with a better response rate (56%) compared to FV (25%) and VV (8%) $p = 0.05$
Pander et al. 2010	270	FF: 119 FV and VV: 157	CAPOX + bevacizumab + cetuximab	Whole population and subgroup analysis in <i>KRAS</i> wild type and <i>KRAS</i> mutant	V allele associated with decrease in PFS (VV and FV 8.2 vs 12.8 months in FF and HR 1.56, $p = 0.006$) regardless of <i>KRAS</i> status
Paez et al. 2010	104	FF: 47 FV: 41 VV: 16 $X^2 = 1.89$ $p = 0.17$	Chemotherapy + cetuximab or panitumumab or panitumumab alone	Whole population and subgroup analysis in <i>KRAS</i> wild type and <i>KRAS</i> mutant	No association found for response rate or PFS.

Study	Patients	Distribution of FCGR3A phenotypes ¹	Treatment	KRAS status of tumor	Results
Dahan et al. 2011	58	FF: 30 FV: 20 VV: 6 $X^2 = 0.88$ $p = 0.34$	Irinotecan + cetuximab	Whole population and in subgroup of KRAS wild type patients	Median OS was 9.8 months in FF vs. 9.0 in FV vs. 2.6 in VV patients $p < 0.001$
Calemma et al. 2012	49	FF: 5 FV: 26 VV: 18 $X^2 = 0.98$ $p = 0.32$	Cetuximab or panitumumab	KRAS wild type patients only	Unfavourable prognosis for FF phenotype Median PFS VV, FV, FF; 18.2 vs. 17.3 vs. 9.4 months $p = 0.04$.
Rodriguez et al. 2012	44	FF: 13 FV and VV: 31	cetuximab	In mutated phenotype population (any KRAS, BRAF, NRAS or PI3CA mutation)	No association found, adjusted odds ratio for VV +FV was 3.8 (95% CI 0.5 -26)
Park et al. 2012	118	FF: 36 FV: 65 VV: 6 $X^2 = 10.86$ $p < 0.001$	Chemotherapy + cetuximab	Whole population and subgroup analysis in KRAS wild type, and KRAS mutant	No significant differences between RR, OS or PFS
Negri et al.	86	FF: 27 FV: 40 VV: 19 $X^2 = 0.33$ $p = 0.85$	cetuximab	KRAS wild type only	No significant differences between response rate or time to tumor progression
Kjersem et al. 2014	328	FF: 162 FV: 131 VV: 35 $X^2 = 1.19$ $p = 0.27$	FLOX +cetuximab	Subgroup analysis in patients with KRAS wild type and KRAS mutant	None of the FCGR3A phenotype were associated with altered response
Geva et al. 2014	1024	FF: 391 FV: 466 VV: 167 $X^2 = 1.99$ $p = 0.16$	Chemotherapy + cetuximab or cetuximab monotherapy	Whole population and subgroup analysis in KRAS wild type, exploratory analysis in KRAS mutant	No differences between median PFS between VV vs. FF +FV, better DCR and median OS in KRAS mutant subgroup in exploratory setting

Abbreviations: PFS, progression free survival; OS, overall survival; DCR, disease control rate; RR, response rate; CAPOX, capecitabine and oxaliplatin; FLOX, fluorouracil and oxaliplatin

1. If $p < 0.05$ not consistent with Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium.

Material and Methods

Individual patient data acquisition

To study the association between survival times and *FCGR3A* polymorphism, a literature search was performed in June 2014 on PubMed, by using the keywords cetuximab, FCGR polymorphisms, KRAS and (metastatic) colorectal cancer. We used the following criteria to select publications:

1. Treatment with cetuximab in mCRC;
2. Individual patient data regarding overall survival (OS) and progression free survival (PFS) or the individual patient data reconstruction using Kaplan Meier curves;
3. Availability of *FCGR3A* (rs396991) genotype;
4. Genotyping methods of eligible studies were reviewed to prevent inclusion of patients with an unreliable *FCGR3A* genotype. (Several methods do not discriminate between *FCGR3A* and *FCGR3B*, which may result in genotyping errors[26]);
5. Availability of *KRAS* mutational status (*KRAS* codon 12, 13 and if possible 61) of the tumor (both *KRAS* wild type and mutant patient were included in this study).

This resulted in the inclusion of patients from three studies, the CAIRO2 [24], Rodriguez et al.[15] and the study of the European colorectal cancer consortium [30]. The *FCGR3A* polymorphism data from the European colorectal cancer consortium, was not published at time of analysis but the authors provided us with the data. Recently, the *FCGR3A* polymorphisms data from the European colorectal cancer consortium was published by Geva et al.[18]. All studies were approved by the local ethics committees and all included patients gave informed consent. Articles were excluded due to unknown *KRAS* status[13,31]. *KRAS* wild type patients only[19,21], genotyping method[16,20,22,23], missing survival data[14] and inability to provide the data[17].

Study 1: cohort CAIRO2 study

Data from 193 patients were available from the CAIRO2 study, which started in the pre-*KRAS* era. These patients with mCRC were treated with firstline capecitabine, oxaliplatin and bevacizumab (CAPOX-B) or the same regimen plus cetuximab. Cetuximab was administered intravenously at a dose of 400 mg/m² on the first day, followed by 250 mg/m² weekly thereafter. Dose reductions were carried out according to the study protocol. The duration of a treatment cycle was three weeks. Treatment was continued until disease progression, death or unacceptable toxicity, whichever occurred first.

Study 2: cohort Rodriguez et al.

Data were available from 99 patients. Patients with mCRC were treated with cetuximab administered on an every-second week schedule at a dose of 500 mg/m² combined with standard irinotecan or oxaliplatin based chemotherapy. Patients were treated in either first (31%) or second line therapy

Study 3: cohort European colorectal cancer consortium

From the European colorectal cancer consortium data were available from 1009 patients. Patients with mCRC were treated with irinotecan or oxaliplatin based chemotherapy and cetuximab or cetuximab monotherapy.

KRAS tumor status and FCGR3A rs396991 polymorphism

In all three studies, genotyping of the *FCGR3A* was performed on a validated realtime PCR system with a predesigned assay for *FCGR3A* rs396991 (C__25815666_10). Details about the used methods are described elsewhere [15,30,32].

Outcome measures

The association between *FCGR3A* rs396991 genotype and the primary endpoint PFS and the secondary endpoint OS were investigated. PFS was calculated as time from randomisation to the first documented progression, death or loss to follow up, whichever occurred first. OS was estimated from time since randomisation to death or loss to follow up.

Statistical analysis

Meta-analysis based on the survival outcomes coming from the three studies described above was performed, for two studies individual patient data were available while for the third study individual patient data were reconstructed from the estimated PFS and OS. Reconstruction of the relevant data is discussed by Fiocco et al. [33,34]. Further details on data analysis are described in appendix 1. A multivariate mixed effects Cox proportional hazard model with study as random effects was employed to investigate the effects of *FCGR3A*, *KRAS* mutation status and the interaction between *FCGR3A* and *KRAS* on the primary endpoint PFS and secondary endpoint OS.

Results

Individual patient data meta-analysis

A total of 1,301 patients were included in the analysis. In table 2 an overview of the incidence of *FCGR3A* polymorphism and *KRAS* tumor status is shown. For all three studies, the reported *FCGR3A* genotypes were in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. To study the effect of *FCGR3A* polymorphisms, we used a dominant genetic model (FF vs non FF). Table 3 shows an overview of the median PFS and OS for the three different studies for *FCGR3A* FF and non FF.

Progression free survival

The hazard ratio (HR) for *FCGR3A* non FF, adjusted for *KRAS* and the interaction between *FCGR3A* and *KRAS* was equal to 1.07 (95% confidence interval 0.89 – 1.29, $p = 0.45$). The estimated pooled Kaplan Meier curves, for patients with *KRAS* mutant and wild type tumors and *FCGR3A* FF and non FF status, are shown in Figure 1. A small, non-significant effect is seen between *FCGR3A* FF and non FF, stratified for *KRAS* status of the tumor. For patients with *KRAS* wild type tumors, median PFS was equal to 14.0 (95% CI interval 12.5 – 15.9) and 15.2 (95% CI interval 14.0 – 17.1) months for *FCGR3A* FF and non FF respectively. For patients

with a *KRAS* mutant tumor PFS was 10.6 (95% CI interval 9.0 – 13.1) and 9.2 (95% CI interval 8.0 – 11.3) months for FCGR3A FF and non FF, respectively.

Table 2: distribution of FCGR3A polymorphisms

Polymorphism or mutation	Study 1: CAIRO2 N (%)	Study 2: Rodriguez N (%)	Study 3: European colorectal cancer consortium N (%)	Total
total	193	99	1009	1301
<i>KRAS</i> wild type	125 (64.8)	56 (56.7)	676 (67.0)	857 (65.9)
<i>KRAS</i> mutant	68 (35.2)	43 (43.4)	333 (33.0)	444 (34.1)
FCGR3A – FF	84 (43.5)	43 (43.4)	384 (38.1)	511 (39.3)
FCGR3A – VF	83 (43.0)	41 (41.4)	459 (45.5)	583 (44.8)
FCGR3A – VV	26 (13.5)	15 (15.1)	166 (16.5)	207 (15.9)
HWE p-value ¹	0.45	0.32	0.15	0.06

Abbreviation: HWE: Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium.

1. If $p < 0.05$ not consistent with Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium.

Table 3: Median PFS and OS for cetuximab treated *KRAS* wild type and mutant patients

Study	Treatment	FCGR3A	Median PFS	Median OS
1: CAIRO2	CAPOX + bevacizumab and cetuximab	FF non FF	11.6 months 8.1 months	21.7 months 21.9 months
2: Rodriguez	Cetuximab 2-weekly	FF non FF	5.0 months 4 months	44.5 months 25.9 months
3: European colorectal cancer consortium	Irinotecan/ oxaliplatin based chemotherapy +cetuximab or cetuximab alone.	FF non FF	4.1 months 3.8 months	9.9 months 10.1 months

Overall survival

The HR for FCGR3A non FF, adjusted for *KRAS* and the interaction between FCGR3A and *KRAS* was 0.91 (95% confidence interval 0.77 – 1.07). In figure 2 the pooled Kaplan Meier curves for patients with *KRAS* mutant and wild type tumors, and FCGR3A FF and non-FF status are depicted. A difference between patients with a *KRAS* wild type and *KRAS* mutant tumor was observed in the plots, although this difference is not significant. For patients with *KRAS* wild type tumor, median OS was equal to 37.3 (95% CI interval 33.1 – 45.3) and 46.3 (95% CI interval 39.0 – 54.0) months for FCGR3A FF and non FF respectively. For patients with *KRAS* mutant tumor median OS was equal to 27.7 (95% CI interval 22.6-35.2) and 21.5 (18.9-26.4) months for FCGR3A FF and non FF respectively.

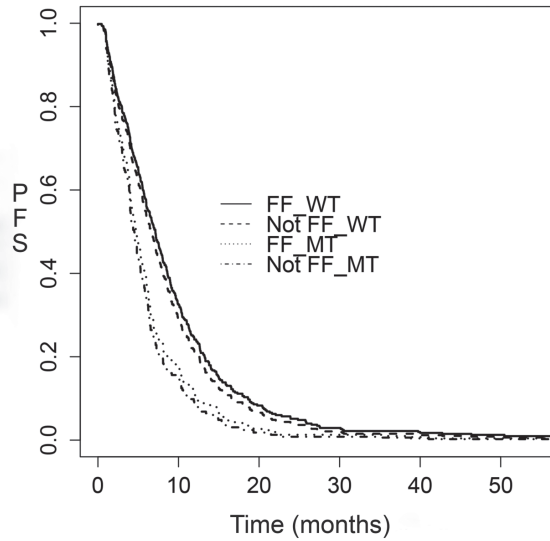


Figure 1: Estimated Kaplan Meier curves for progression free survival in patients treated with cetuximab, stratified by *KRAS* tumor status and FCGR3A status.

Abbreviations: PFS: progression free survival, FF_WT: FCGR3A FF and *KRAS* wild type; Not FF_WT, FCGR3A not FF and *KRAS* wild type; FF_MT, FCGR3A FF and *KRAS* mutant; Not FF_MT, FCGR3A not FF and *KRAS* mutant

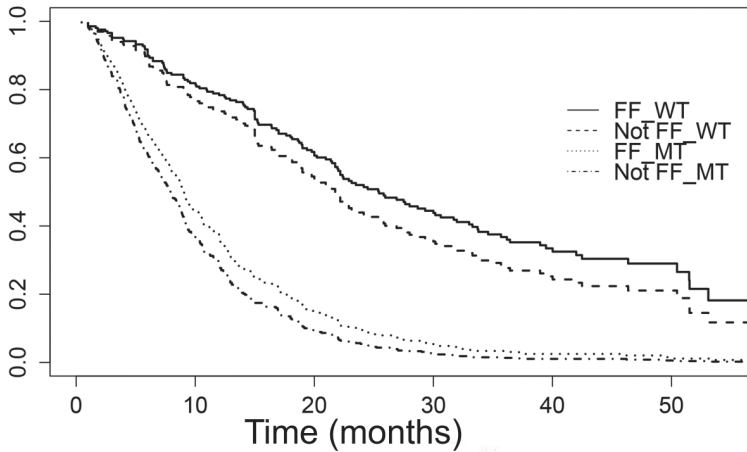


Figure 2: Estimated Kaplan Meier curves for overall survival in patients treated with cetuximab, stratified by *KRAS* tumor status and FCGR3A status.

Abbreviations: FF_WT: FCGR3A FF and *KRAS* wild type; Not FF_WT, FCGR3A not FF and *KRAS* wild type; FF_MT, FCGR3A FF and *KRAS* mutant; Not FF_MT, FCGR3A not FF and *KRAS* mutant

Discussion

The meta-analysis performed in this study indicates that the *FCGR3A* (rs396991) polymorphism is not associated with progression free or overall survival in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer treated with cetuximab in patients with either a *KRAS* mutant or *KRAS* wild type tumor. In our meta-analysis we did not find any advantage for the FF genotype in terms of clinical efficacy.

Both *KRAS* wild type and mutant metastatic colorectal cancer patients were included in the analysis, since the interesting results seen in the preclinical[29] and CAIRO 2[24] study. This meta-analysis however shows that there is no difference between the *KRAS* wild type and mutant populations.

Nowadays cetuximab is used in RAS wild type patients only. In the three included studies only the *KRAS* status of the tumor was known. Unfortunately, we were not able to extend our research to the effect of *FCGR3A* in the RAS mutant colorectal cancer patient due to the retrospective design of the studies included in this meta-analysis. Most probably the including RAS mutant colorectal patients in the analysis would not have altered the outcome of this study

Differences between studies due to a specific design and methodology, clinical procedures, different lines of chemotherapy and patients' characteristics can contribute to variability in treatment effect among studies. Heterogeneous studies are a common problem in meta-analysis[36]; to take into account the inter-trial heterogeneity caused by different treatments and lines of therapy used in these studies, we performed a meta-analysis by including studies as random effects, allowing for differences in the treatment effect and different regimens used from study to study and providing a more efficient estimate of the average treatment effect[37].

The inconsistent finding in studies concerning *FCGR3A* polymorphism and cetuximab efficacy shows the importance of genotyping methods, appropriate sample size and proper use of statistical methodology. We pooled data concerning 1,301 patients to improve the statistical power to detect the presence of a treatment effects on survival. Instead of reporting the classical forest plot based on hazard ratio for each individual study, we performed a meta-analysis based on individual patient data, which gave a better estimation of the potential benefit of *FCGR3A* FF status by using the individual patient data. An individual patient data meta-analysis approach of time to event outcomes, although usually more demanding, allows a deeper investigation.

Advanced and metastasizing CRC and prior lines of chemotherapy may be linked to decreased immune responses and impaired natural killer cell dysfunction and consequently failure of cetuximab treatment[38-40]. This may result in a more limited role of ADCC in cetuximab treated patients with advanced disease. Noteworthy, patients from CAIRO2 received concomitant chemotherapy and in this study, a difference in median PFS between *FCGR3A* FF and non FF was observed. Nonetheless, no difference was seen for *FCGR3A* on median OS.

In this meta-analysis we have studied the *FCGR3A* polymorphism rs396991 but ADCC is a complex biological process and a more in-depth analysis of alternative crucial steps in the immunological pathway may be of influence. Consideration of other FCGRs, MHC expression, IFN-gamma pathway components and antigen processing machinery genes might provide a broader insight into the role of immunity in cetuximab efficacy.

In conclusion, our results do not support a predictive role for the *FCGR3A* polymorphism (rs396991) in cetuximab efficacy.

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Appendix 1: data reconstruction

Starting point for the meta-analysis are the estimated survival curve reported for each study and the minimum and the maximum follow up (\min_{FUP} and \max_{FUP}) of patients. These quantities may be given directly but most often they will need to be estimated from the manuscript by looking at dates of accrual (if given) and from the date of submission, or perhaps publication of the manuscript. A model for the censoring mechanism based on the minimum and the maximum follow up is assumed here for computing the number at risk and person years for each time. Let $C(t)$ be the function that models the censoring mechanism. Based on the available information we choose the function $C(t)$ as follows

$$C(t) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } t \leq \min FUP \\ 1 - \frac{t - \min FUP}{\max FUP - \min FUP} & \text{if } \min FUP < t < \max FUP \\ 0 & \text{if } t \geq \max FUP \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

This function expresses the proportion of patients at time t that have at least t time units of follow-up. Given the number of eligible patients (n), the effective number at risk, the number of revisions at time j and the number of censored are estimated, respectively, as

$$\tilde{r}_j = n S_j C_j, \quad (2)$$

$$d_j = n(S_{j-1} - S_j) \frac{C_{j-1} + C_j}{2} \quad (3)$$

and

$$c_j = n(C_{j-1} - C_j) \frac{S_{j-1} + S_j}{2} \quad (4)$$

This assumes that the censored observations are distributed uniformly over the interval. Under the same assumption, from the number of patients at risk r_j , we can determine the number of person-years over interval I_j , as $r_j = \Delta_j (r_j - c_j / 2)$, where $\Delta_j = t_j - t_{j-1}$ the length of I_j . Following the methodology described the data for each study involved in the meta-analysis have been reconstructed. A model with study as random effects has been fitted to the reconstructed data, to estimate the hazard ratio of progression free and overall survival and its associate confidence interval.

