Nonadherence and discontinuation of adjuvant endocrine therapy among young women with breast cancer in Hong Kong (abstract)

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Objectives:
While adjuvant hormonal therapy reduces mortality for women with non-metastatic breast cancer, non-persistence to endocrine therapy is common in young women. Premature discontinuation of hormonal treatment was found to be associated with increased recurrence. This study aimed to assess the non-compliant behaviors and treatment outcomes of young women in Hong Kong.

Methods:
Young women aged under 40 with non-metastatic, hormonal receptor-positive invasive breast cancer diagnosed between 2005 and 2013 were identified retrospectively from the Breast Cancer Registry in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Hong Kong. Clinicopathological and treatment information were retrieved and analysed.

Results:
We identified 365 young breast cancer patients treated with adjuvant hormonal therapy. The majority of patients received tamoxifen alone as the initial endocrine therapy. Over a median follow-up of 9.1 years, discontinuation before the recommended 5-year treatment was found in 38 (10.4%) patients. The most common reasons were side effects and plans for pregnancy. We observed 10 (26.3%) recurrences among those who discontinued the endocrine therapy.

Conclusion:
Adherence and persistence with endocrine therapy among young breast cancer patients in Hong Kong were comparable to those in international reports. Increase in awareness and interventions are necessary to identify suboptimal compliance of hormonal therapy and prevent recurrence of breast cancer.