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INTRODUCTION

Non metastatic cervical cancer is curable and can be treated with radiotherapy (1). A delay in receiving treatment due to long waiting times results in upstaging of the disease stage and negatively affects the treatment outcomes (2). However, real world evidence that progression occurs while waiting for treatment is scarce in low-income countries.

AIM

We evaluated the impact of long waiting times for radiotherapy in patients with cervical cancer at a referral center in Ethiopia.

METHOD

A longitudinal study was conducted from January 5, 2019, to May 30, 2020 to address the objectives of this study. Pathologically diagnosed cervical cancer patients with stage IIB to stage IVA were included in the study. We used Kaplan–Meier analysis to assess overall survival with time. Multivariate Cox regression analysis, using the backward LR selection method, was used to fit the final model.

	Time Interval (In Days)				
	Median	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	SD
Diagnosis to booking for CCRT (n=113)	19	61	780	2	119
Booking for CCRT to call to start CCRT (n=13)	458	390	611	21	191
Booking to disease progression (n=77)	51	92	575	1	104
Booking to death (n=59)	376	412	1048	42	263

RESULTS

The median waiting time for radical radiotherapy after diagnosis was 477 days. Waiting for more than 51 days for radiotherapy results in disease progression. Of the 115 patients included in this study, 59 (51.3%) died during the study. A delay in waiting (AHR=3, 95%CI:1.7-4.9) was significantly associated with disease progression and decreased survival.

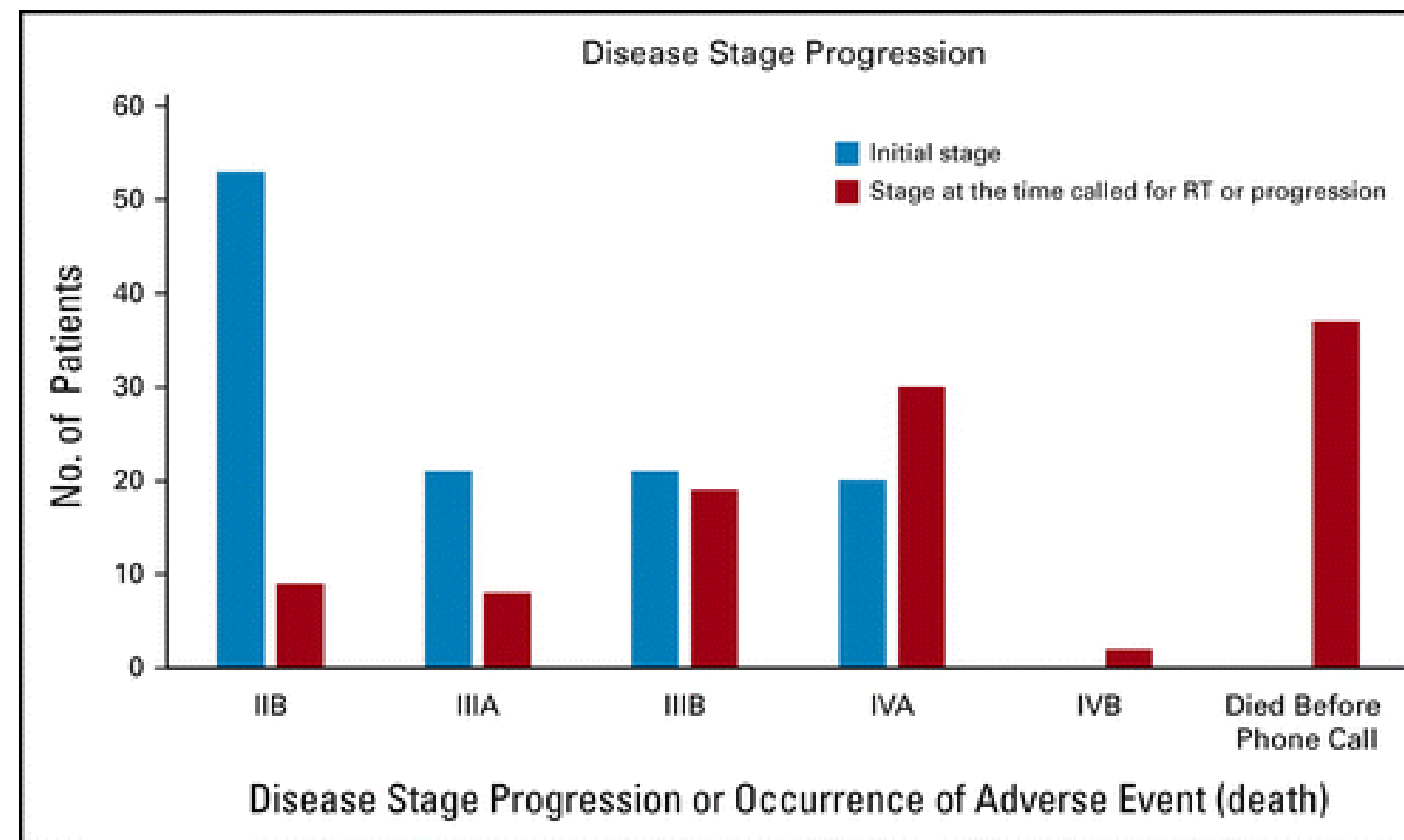


Figure 1: Stage at initial presentation and at the time called for RT treatment or during the progression of cervical cancer patients, TASH, Ethiopia, 2020.

CONCLUSIONS

Waiting time to receive radiotherapy is very long. Urgent action is required to significantly reduce waiting times and improve the survival of cervical cancer patients.

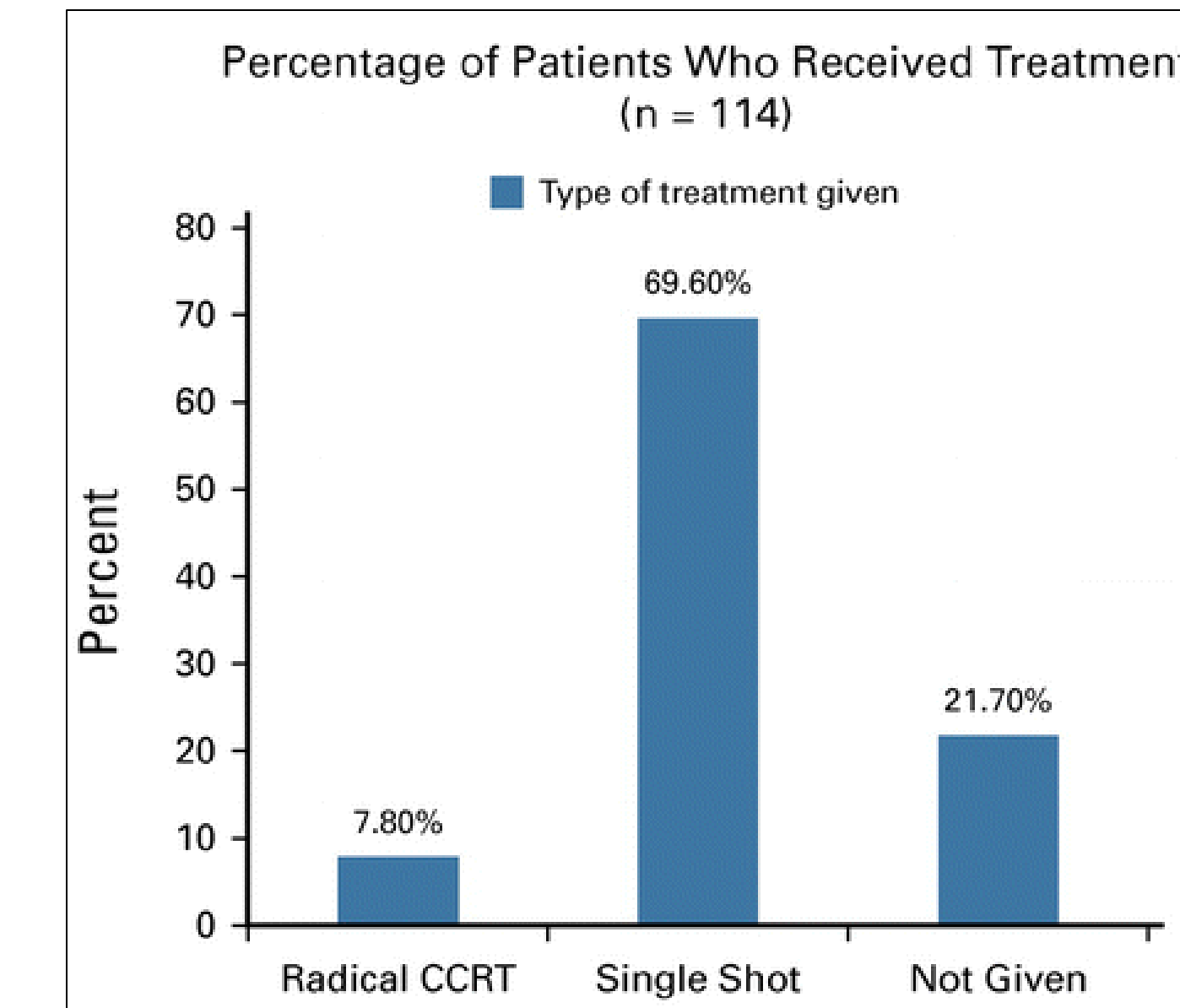


Figure 2: Radiation therapy regimen received by cervical cancer patients, TASH, Ethiopia, 2020.

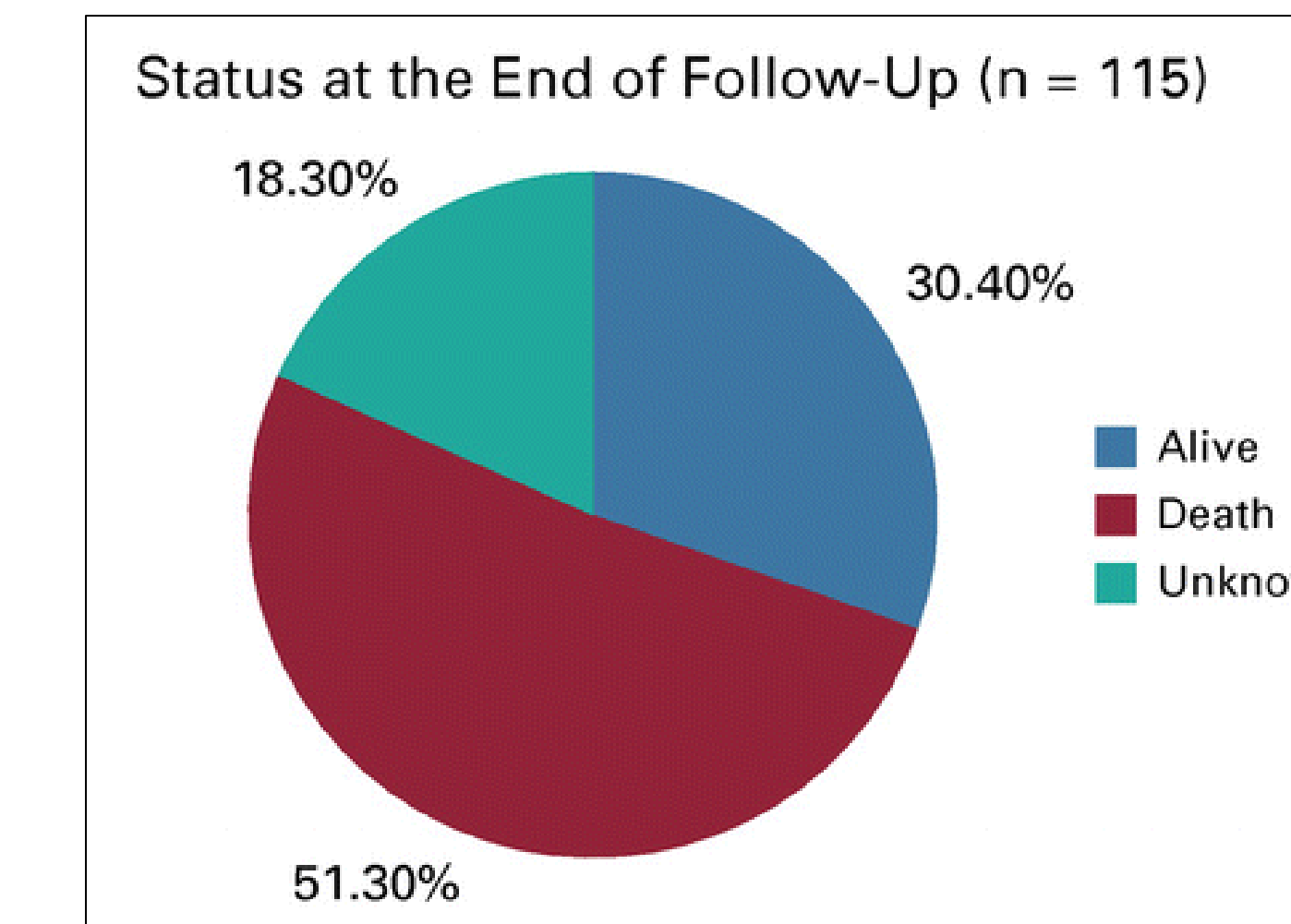


Figure 3: Status of cervical cancer patients at the end of follow up, TASH, Ethiopia, 2020

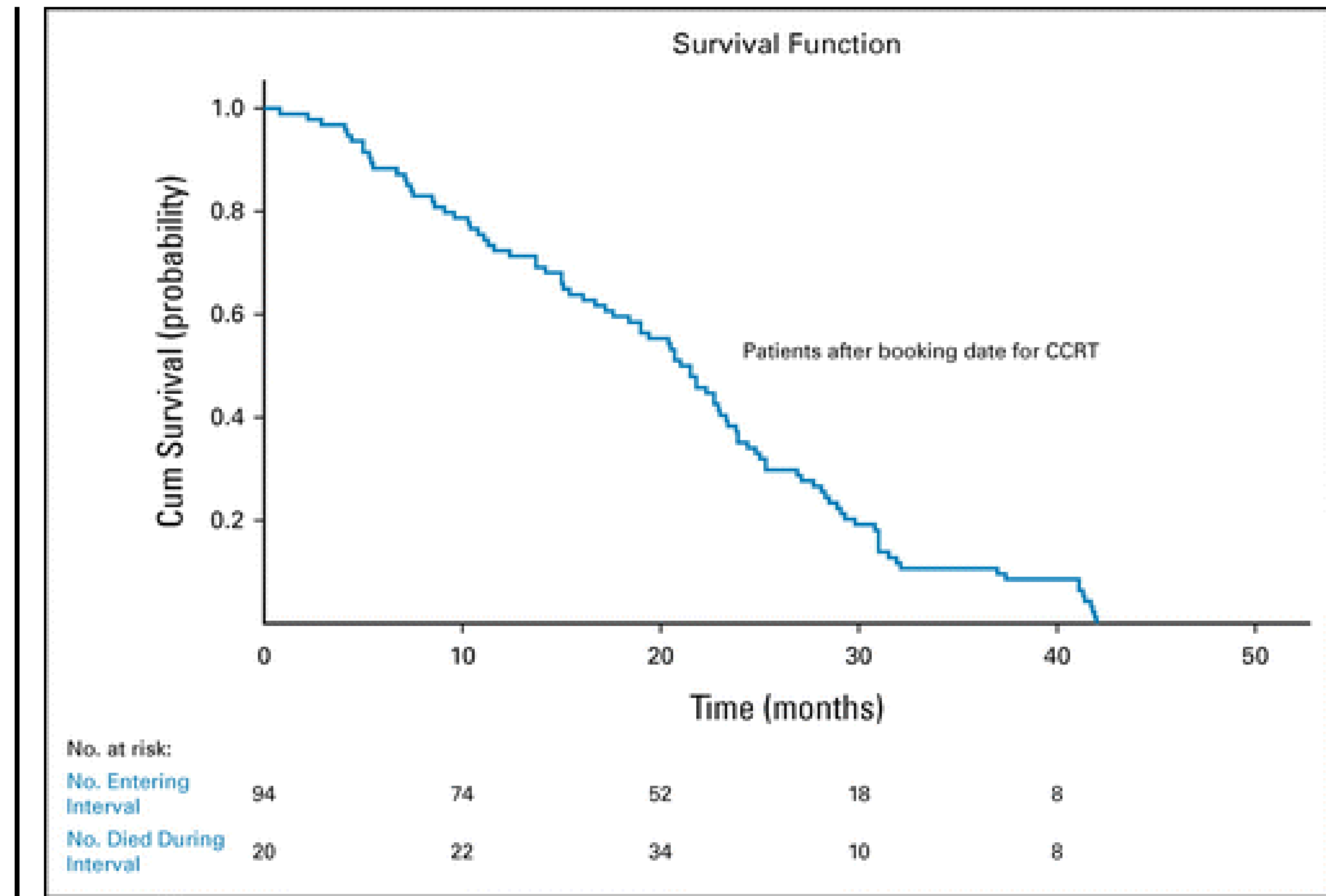


Figure 4: Kaplan Meier plot of the Survival function of cervical cancer patients after booking date for CCRT, TASH, Ethiopia, 2020

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