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## ***Research Article***

# **Renal function in patients receiving streptozocin for locally advanced or metastatic digestive neuroendocrine tumours: results of the Streptotox-FFCD0906 study**

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**# See supplementary appendix for the list of FFCD 0906 investigators/collaborators**

**RUNNING TITLE:** Streptotox study

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### **Statement of Ethics**

Published research must comply with the guidelines for human studies and should include evidence that the research was conducted ethically in accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki. In the manuscript, authors should state that subjects (or their parents or guardians) have given their written informed consent and that the study protocol was approved by the institute's committee on human research.

### **Declaration of interests**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

☒The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships

which may be considered as potential competing interests:

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction.** Streptozocin can impair renal function. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the evolution of renal function in patients receiving this anti-mitotic for the treatment of locally advanced/metastatic digestive well differentiated neuroendocrine tumours. **Methods.** A prospective and a retrospective cohort of patients with normal

baseline renal function were analysed. The primary endpoint was the incidence of a decrease in the estimated glomerular filtration rate  $\geq 25\%$  during treatment. Secondary endpoints were the evaluation of glomerular filtration rate changes, the impact of combined nephrotoxic treatments, other toxicities, compliance, and the objective response rate. **Results.** After screening 142 patients, 27 were included in the prospective and 84 in the retrospective cohort. A decrease in estimated glomerular filtration rate  $\geq 25\%$  was observed in 32 patients (30%): respectively four (15.4%) and 28 patients (34.1%) among respectively 26 and 82 patients with numerous measures ( $P = 0.0097$ ). Altogether, 39 patients (35%) experienced grade 1-2 renal toxicity, while no grade 3-4 occurred in the prospective and 1 occurred in the retrospective cohort. Renal toxicity was more frequent in the retrospective cohort with a less careful follow up. As best responses, objective response was achieved in 27% of patients with pancreatic primary tumours, disease control in 78.9% of patients with pancreatic primary tumours, in 87% of those with small bowel tumours and in 72.7% of patients with other primary locations. **Conclusions.** Strongly recommended for pancreatic NET, streptozocin is associated with frequent mild renal toxicity but low occurrence of renal impairment in patients with baseline normal renal function and under adequate hydration.

*Keywords:* digestive neuroendocrine tumours, renal function, streptozocin

*Abbreviations:*

NETs: neuroendocrine tumours; pNETs: duodeno-pancreatic neuroendocrine tumours; STZ: streptozocin or streptozotocin; eGFR: estimated glomerular filtration rate; PC: prospective cohort; RC: retrospective cohort; MDRD: Modification of Diet in Renal Disease; OR: objective response; sbNETs: small bowel NETs.

## 1 **Introduction**

2 Digestive neuroendocrine tumours (NETs) account for less than 1.5% of digestive  
3 tumours in most Western countries [1]. However, in recent decades, there has been a  
4 trend towards an increasing incidence of digestive NETs [2]. Survival rates depend  
5 mainly on tumour differentiation, most NETs being well-differentiated. For metastatic  
6 disease, 5-year survival rates are around 50% for well-differentiated NETs [1]. The  
7 treatment of well-differentiated digestive NETs depends on the stage of the disease,  
8 differentiation, spread and site.

9 Systemic chemotherapy is recommended by ENETS [3] for the unresectable, well-  
10 differentiated duodeno-pancreatic NETs (pNETs) if progressive, G2, symptomatic or  
11 bulky and in G3 neuroendocrine neoplasms. Chemotherapy may be considered in  
12 NET of other sites (stomach, colon or rectum) under certain conditions (G2 tumor,  
13 rapidly progressive disease and/or after failure of other therapies, or if SSTR imaging  
14 is negative). In the French guidelines [4], the indications moreover include the  
15 presence of bone metastases and a positive FDG-TEP. Systemic chemotherapy is  
16 not mentioned among the treatments of the well-differentiated small bowel NETs  
17 (sbNETs) in the North American guidelines [5]. It is not recommended by ENETS [3]  
18 in nonpancreatic NET unless G2 NET (Ki-67 >15%), tumors displaying aggressive  
19 biological behavior (RECIST progression in 3–6 months) or in those which are SSTR  
20 negative. Systemic chemotherapy can be used in well-differentiated metastatic  
21 sbNETs after somatostatin analogs, hepatic embolization, radionuclide and targeted  
22 therapies, in case of contra-indication or failure of these treatments, as an option in  
23 the French guidelines [4].

24 During the study, the first cytotoxic used was streptozocin or streptozotocin (STZ),  
25 approved by FDA in 1982 and French health authorities in 1985. It was used in intra-  
26 arterial procedure during the chemo-embolization or in a systemic administration,

27 commonly with doxorubicin [6,7], or 5FU [9]. The authorization was renewed by EMA  
28 in 2018 for the systemic treatment of adult patients with inoperable, advanced or  
29 metastatic, progressive and/or symptomatic, well-differentiated, G1 or G2  
30 neuroendocrine tumours of pancreatic origin, in combination with 5-Fluorouracil but  
31 not doxorubicin despite of the great advantage with this anthracycline in terms of  
32 overall survival [6]. It was justified by the cumulative toxicity of doxorubicine, that  
33 leaded Moertel to recommend a limited number of cycles before a therapeutic break  
34 [7]. Alternative chemotherapies have not an EMA/FDA approval in the absence of  
35 prospective randomized studies: temozolomide alone [9,10] or associated with  
36 capecitabine [11], dacarbazine alone [12,13] or with 5FU [14], oxaliplatin with  
37 gemcitabine [15], 5FU [16] or capecitabine [17], irinotecan with 5FU [18].

38 Renal toxicity was reported in clinical studies in the seventies. Some renal  
39 dysfunction was described in a very large range: 28 to 100 % of patients  
40 [19,20,21,22] receiving STZ. Animal models and clinical reports suggest initial  
41 proximal tubule and dose-dependent cumulative renal toxicity [22]. Glycosuria,  
42 hypophosphatemia, tubular acidosis and low molecular-weight tubular proteinuria,  
43 biological markers of proximal tubular toxicity, generally occur first, before the decline  
44 in renal function. The treatment rarely leads to anuria. Serum creatinine, estimated  
45 glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), plasma electrolytes, proteinuria and glycosuria have  
46 to be measured before, during, and after treatment with STZ, to avoid more severe  
47 kidney injury. Mild to moderate proteinuria is one of the first signs of renal  
48 dysfunction, and when it occurs, dose reduction is recommended. Treatment must be  
49 interrupted in cases of increased proteinuria and severe renal dysfunction.

50 The purpose of the Streptotox-FFCD0906 study was to evaluate more accurately,  
51 prospectively and retrospectively, the evolution of renal function in patients receiving  
52 STZ for a well-differentiated digestive NET.



53

## 54 **Materials and Methods**

### 55 **Patient population**

56 Patients with histologically proven, locally advanced or metastatic, digestive NET,  
57 receiving or having previously received STZ were eligible. The other inclusion criteria  
58 were: patients aged at least 18 years, eGFR > 60 ml/min at the start of STZ  
59 treatment, and 24-hour proteinuria < 500 mg before treatment.

60 Patients of the prospective cohort (PC) were verbally informed and provided written  
61 informed consent. Patients of the retrospective cohort (RC) were given the  
62 information sheet. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of  
63 Helsinki and was declared to the appropriate French authorities responsible for  
64 supervising computerized individual data files and ensuring the respect of ethical  
65 requirements.

### 66 **Study design**

67 This was a French, observational only, multicentre study involving two cohorts: a PC,  
68 which included *de novo* STZ-treated patients followed for 12 months, and a RC,  
69 which was based on data collected during and 3 months after treatment in patients  
70 treated with parenteral STZ and saw in consultation during the inclusion period. In the  
71 PC, the biological assessment before and after each cycle included creatinemia,  
72 glomerular filtration rate, calculated with the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease  
73 (MDRD) formula [23], blood nitrogen, serum electrolytes, including calcium and  
74 phosphorus, 24-hour proteinuria, glycosuria, microalbuminuria and beta-2  
75 microalbuminuria. The analyses were done in each centre. If biological abnormalities  
76 occurred, a dose decrease or treatment interruption was recommended and adapted  
77 by the investigators to each patient, according to the protocol used in the center.

78 For budget reasons, it was not possible to perform a continuous monitoring during  
79 the inclusion phase of the study.

80 The primary endpoint of this study was the proportion of patients who experienced a  
81 decrease in the eGFR (MDRD formula) of at least 25% during STZ treatment  
82 compared with the baseline value: the lowest value during treatment included the  
83 value at the last cycle and the value after the end of treatment. The 25% threshold  
84 was chosen as clinically relevant in clinical nephrology and often chosen as end-point  
85 in trial assessing degradation of renal failure.

86 The secondary endpoints were eGFR changes during the treatment, the impact of  
87 combined nephrotoxic treatments, other toxicities, compliance, and objective  
88 response (OR) rates. Four subgroups of patients were defined according to renal  
89 function changes (eGFR decrease  $\geq$  25%, eGFR decrease between 15 and 25%,  
90 change in eGFR  $<$  15%, and eGFR increase  $>$  15%). These thresholds were chosen  
91 as clinically relevant. The renal function outcome was also studied according to the  
92 six-group KDIGO classification, which includes eGFR [24]. Combined nephrotoxic  
93 treatments were recorded. Additionally, predictive biological parameters of renal  
94 dysfunction were assessed.

95 In the PC, the response rate was assessed by the investigators and reviewed during  
96 the local multidisciplinary staff meetings using the RECIST criteria. In the RC, it was  
97 assessed from clinical records.

98 Patients were recruited over 24 months from December 2010 to July 2012. For each  
99 cohort, the study was conducted according to routine practices in terms of treatment  
100 and follow-up.

## 101 **Statistical analysis**

102 Given the paucity of data regarding the primary objective and in light of routine  
103 observed data, the proportion of patients presenting a decrease in eGFR  $\geq$  25%

104 following STZ treatment was estimated at 10%. An overall sample of 140 patients  
105 with locally advanced/metastatic digestive NETs was required for a two-sided alpha  
106 risk 5%. Hypotheses was for the 2 cohorts to achieve a global sample size of 140  
107 patients. The scheduled distribution of patients was 30 patients in the prospective  
108 cohort and 110 patients in the retrospective cohort for feasibility reasons in this  
109 relatively rare pathology.

110 Data were described using means, medians and ranges or counts and  
111 percentages as appropriate. The two cohorts were compared using the Student test  
112 or Wilcoxon test for quantitative variables and Chi<sup>2</sup> or the Fischer Exact test for  
113 qualitative variables. For each variable, the number of missing data was mentioned,  
114 and these data were excluded from the analysis without replacement procedures.

115

## 116 **Results**

### 117 **Patients' characteristics**

118 110 patients were included in the RC between 24/10/10 and 29/02/2012 and 30  
119 patients were included in the PC between 16/12/2010 and 04/07/2012.

120 In the PC, of the 31 patients screened, three were excluded for exclusive intra-arterial  
121 treatment, and one patient was excluded from the analysis because of baseline  
122 proteinuria exceeding the cut-off defined by inclusion criteria (Figure 1). The main  
123 characteristics of patients and tumours are summarized in Table 1. The median time  
124 from diagnosis to STZ treatment was 5 months (range: 1 to 128 months). All patients  
125 presented a well-differentiated NET. Relevant comorbidities were diabetes in five  
126 patients (18.5%), and high blood pressure in six patients (22.2%). Before the start of  
127 STZ, seven patients (27%) had received a previous treatment consisting of  
128 chemotherapy (n = 3), and/or somatostatin analogue (n = 4), and/or

129 chemoembolization (n = 1), and/or surgery (n = 1), and/or radiofrequency ablation (n  
130 = 1). STZ was the non-surgical first-line treatment in 15/22 pNETs and in 5/5 small  
131 bowel NETs (sbNETs).

132 In the RC, of the 110 patients screened, 10 were excluded for exclusive intra-arterial  
133 treatment, 14 did not have a well differentiated tumour and two patients were  
134 subsequently excluded from the analysis because of missing baseline eGFR values  
135 (Figure 1). The 84 remaining patients presented a well-differentiated NET. Relevant  
136 comorbidities were diabetes in 16 patients (19%), and high blood pressure in 13  
137 patients (15.5%). Before the start of treatment, 31 patients (37%) had received a  
138 previous treatment consisting of chemotherapy (n = 7), and/or somatostatin analogue  
139 (n = 18), and/or interferon (n = 2), and/or chemoembolization (n = 9), and/or surgery  
140 (n = 3), and/or radiotherapy (n = 1). STZ was the non-surgical first-line treatment in  
141 38/54 pNETs, in 6/18 sbNETs and in 6/12 other tumours.

142 The proportion of pancreatic tumours (Table 1) tended to be higher in the PC than in  
143 the RC (81.5% vs. 64.3%, p = 0.09).

144 The duration of follow up was on an average 6.42 months (standard deviation = 2.92)  
145 in the PC and 7.42 months (standard deviation = 4.47) in the RC.

#### 146 **Streptozocin treatment**

147 Among the 27 patients of the PC, the intravenous treatment was  
148 polychemotherapy consisting of a combination of STZ with doxorubicin, fluorouracil,  
149 or epirubicin (Table 2). The dose of STZ was reduced in only one patient because of  
150 severe myeloma leading to treatment interruption after the second cycle.

151 In the RC, one patient first received five cycles of intravenous STZ and then two  
152 cycles of intra-arterial STZ. The characteristics of the intravenous STZ treatment are  
153 described in Table 2. All patients received polychemotherapy and all 16 dose  
154 reductions were due to toxicity. For three of the 44 patients who received doxorubicin

155 as the combined chemotherapy, this agent was changed to fluorouracil for the last  
156 cycles. Two patients concurrently received a somatostatin analogue, and seven  
157 concurrently received bevacizumab and fluorouracil.

158 Of note, a higher proportion of patients in the RC than in the PC received  
159 fluorouracil (38% vs. 25.9%) whereas more patients in the PC received doxorubicin  
160 ( $p = 0.014$ ). Overall, the cumulative doses given were similar in both cohorts ( $p =$   
161  $0.27$ ), with more cycle delay in the PC and more dose reductions in the RC.

162 Some patients (half in the PC, one third in the RC) with stable disease or a  
163 response to treatment were allowed a therapeutic break or underwent a surgical  
164 procedure. The main reasons for treatment interruption in both cohorts are presented  
165 in Table 2 (response, stability or therapeutic break in 40%). No treatment was  
166 stopped for a grade 3-4 renal toxicity. When the treatment was stopped for toxicity, a  
167 renal grade 1-2 toxicity was described in 77% of the 22 patients versus in 19/89  
168 (21%) patients with a treatment's interruption for another reasons. In the patients with  
169 a stop of treatment because of toxicities, 76 % had received up to 3 cycles; the  
170 number of cycles in this group was a median 3, on average 3.37, versus respectively  
171 4 and 4.44 in case of interruption for another causes ( $p=0.64$ ). The median number of  
172 received cycles was 5 (range 2-17) when the treatment was stopped for pause and 3  
173 (range 1-8) when it was stopped for progression. The treatment was stopped for  
174 toxicities after one cycle only in 5 patients: one with a grade 1 only renal toxicity, two  
175 with grade 2 renal toxicity associated with other toxicities particularly digestive, one  
176 with grade 3 hypokalemia and grade 3 hepatic toxicity, and one (in the RC) for other  
177 ungraded toxicity.

## 178 **Efficacy**

179 Disease control was observed in 79% of 71 patients with pNETs, 87% of 23 patients  
180 with sbNETs and 73% of the 11 patients with another primary tumour site

181 (Supplemental table 1). Six patients were surgically treated after response or stability  
182 on chemotherapy: 2 in the PC and 4 in the RC.

### 183 **Renal function**

184 For the 108 patients of the two cohorts, a decrease in the eGFR  $\geq$  25% occurred  
185 in 32 patients (30%).

186 For 26 patients of the PC with eGFR values available at baseline and during  
187 treatment, a decrease in the eGFR  $\geq$  25% occurred in four patients (15.4%) (Figure 2  
188 and Table 3). In contrast, the eGFR improved in 19.2% of patients. According to the  
189 KDIGO classification, 20% of patients developed mild renal impairment, no patient  
190 severe worsening (grade 3b-5) of renal function (Supplemental Table 2). The  
191 evolution of the main biological parameters between the first and the last cycle is  
192 presented in Supplemental Table 3, which shows that no major biological changes  
193 occurred during the treatment.

194 For 82 patients of the RC with eGFR values available at baseline and during  
195 treatment, a decrease in eGFR  $\geq$  25% occurred in 28 patients (34.1%) while eGFR  
196 improved in 2.4% (Figure 2 and Table 3). Changes from baseline to the lowest eGFR  
197 during and at the end of treatment were greater in the RC than in the PC ( $p = 0.0041$   
198 and  $p = 0.06$ , respectively). According to the KDIGO classification, 20 patients  
199 (23.8%) with normal renal function at baseline experienced at least one episode of  
200 significant renal impairment (stage 3a = 19, stage 4 = 1) (Supplemental Table 2).

201 Figure 3 shows changes in plasma creatinine during and after the treatment in  
202 each cohort.

203 Data about concomitant treatments was available for 82 patients of the two  
204 cohorts. These treatments were anti-hypertensive agents (N=16), NSAID (N=4),  
205 glycopeptides (N=1), but no aminoglycosides. The iodine injection during the TDM  
206 staging was considered as a nephrotoxic associated treatment by the investigator in

207 5 patients but not kept in the analysis: the TDM with injection is required for each  
208 staging in patients with a good renal function and so the iodine injection was under-  
209 reported by the large majority of investigators. Of the 20 patients who received a  
210 least one concomitant nephrotoxic treatment, 5 (25%) developed renal impairment,  
211 whereas of the 91 patients without concomitant nephrotoxic treatment, 37.4%  
212 presented renal toxicity (p=0.29). After addition to the list of nephrotoxic treatments of  
213 bevacizumab's concomitant administration (7 patients) and previous administration of  
214 large iodine doses used in chemo-embolizations (10 patients), renal impairment was  
215 observed in 37% patients with nephrotoxic associated or previous treatments, and  
216 34.5% patients without these treatments.

217 The univariate analysis of the renal impairment showed no statistically significant  
218 risk factor with the items, sex, age, primitive tumor location, presence of metastases,  
219 diabetes, arterial hypertension, concomitant nephrotoxic treatment, number of cycles  
220 and STZ dose. The renal impairment, in these two different univariate analysis was  
221 identified with eGFR  $\geq$  25%, then with the CTC-NBI classification (all grade of renal  
222 toxicity).

223 Although the early diagnosis of tubular impairment was planned for all patients in  
224 both the PC and RC study, data as follows were recorded for only 110 patients:  
225 proteinuria in 38 patients, glucosuria (no cases), microalbuminuria (eight), beta-2  
226 microalbuminuria (two), kaliemia (73), natremia (12), chloremia (11), calcemia (six),  
227 phosphoremia (five). Given the high number of these missing data, the results are not  
228 provided.

229 According to the NCI-CTC classification, grade 1-2 renal toxicity (serum  
230 creatinine level or eGFR) was observed in less than 35% of patients in each cohort.  
231 No grade 3-4 renal toxicity occurred in the PC versus one in the RC (Table 4).

## 232 **Safety**

233 Sixty percent of patients in each cohort presented at least one episode of toxicity  
234 during the treatment (Table 4). Grade 3-4 CTC-NCI toxicity occurred in four patients  
235 (14.8%) and 13 patients (15.5%) in the PC and RC, respectively. Overall, the main  
236 toxicities were digestive (nausea-vomiting), renal and haematological. No deaths due  
237 to toxicity were reported. The interruption of treatment was decided because of  
238 toxicity (mostly low grade), as described above, in about 20% patients.

## 239 **Discussion**

240 To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore streptozocin-related renal  
241 toxicity with a fixed dose and using the rigour of a PC combined with a retrospective  
242 analysis of routine practice. Treatment regimens were 500 mg/m<sup>2</sup> from day 1 to day 5  
243 every 6 weeks always combined with another cytotoxic agent, for a median duration  
244 of 3 to 4 cycles. Even though the sample sizes and the populations of the two cohorts  
245 were different, the trends in terms of toxicity and efficacy were similar. This study  
246 showed that in routine practice, STZ led to mild renal toxicity.

247 The limits of this study were the sample size of the PC, the monitoring of the  
248 study in the PC and the absence, especially in the RC, of biological results, such as  
249 proteinuria, glucosuria, microalbuminuria, beta-2 microalbuminuria, serum  
250 electrolytes, that could alert the medical team to the presence of possible renal  
251 toxicity. It would probably have been useful to measure these blood and urinary  
252 parameters before each cycle of STZ. In fact, in our series, proteinuria was routinely  
253 tested with a urinary dipstick but if the result was negative, it was not reported in the  
254 medical record.

255 Furthermore, the risk of renal dysfunction on a long time was not evaluated in our  
256 study because of the short follow up after the end of the treatment.

257 Renal toxicity, including nitrosourea, is a well-known side-effect of STZ [19]. In  
258 the light of the results of old studies, renal tubular damage was considered a major



259 limiting toxicity. Pharmacological studies of the urinary excretion of STZ have shown  
260 that a significant proportion of the N-nitroso group of each total dose is found intact in  
261 the urine. A high concentration of this pharmacologically active compound, which is  
262 able to spontaneously release an active methyl group under physiological conditions,  
263 may be responsible for the observed renal tubular toxicity [19,20]. Therefore, it is now  
264 clearly recommended that active urine output be maintained during and following  
265 treatment to ensure dilution of the drug to the lowest possible concentration while it  
266 passes through the renal tubules. However, the incidence of renal toxicity during  
267 treatment with STZ is heterogeneous and depends on the chemotherapy schedule  
268 and the population treated. One old study, involving 106 patients (with very  
269 heterogeneous doses and a wide range of malignancies), reported proteinuria in  
270 28%, a decrease in creatinine clearance in 27% and an increase in BUN and/or  
271 serum creatinine in 7% [21]. A systematic review of chemotherapy in NETS showed  
272 that severe renal toxicity ranges from 0 to 25% in randomized trials, without a clear  
273 definition of toxicities [22]. In three large monocentric retrospective studies, the rate  
274 of NCI-CTC grade 3-4 renal toxicities did not exceed 5% [23,24,25], as in our series.  
275 Our study, with a defined dose of STZ and used in NETs only, showed that up to  
276 35% of patients developed a grade 1-2 renal toxicity, with only 1% of grade 3-4  
277 toxicities. Overall changes in the KDIGO class, using eGFR according to MDRD  
278 formula [17], did not exceed stage 3a in the PC. Changes were greater in the RC. We  
279 observed a decrease in eGFR  $\geq 25\%$  in 15.4% of patients of the PC and in 34.1% of  
280 patients of the RC. Nonetheless, changes remained moderate with no final renal  
281 failure. The different results between the two cohorts could be explained by  
282 differences in the recruitment of patients: the rigour of a prospective trial, which  
283 included selected patients who benefited from better follow-up compared with routine  
284 practice in the RC, which probably better reflects 'real life' care. In the prospective

285 setting, with closer follow-up of renal function, eGFR improved in 19.2% of the  
286 patients. These differences indicate that renal function should be carefully monitored  
287 and patients better hydrated during administration of the drug. Hydration before and  
288 after each STZ administration, as is the case for cisplatin, is now recommended.

289 The other toxicities of STZ have been described previously and are manageable  
290 even though there is great variability between studies, regimen and patients for each  
291 side effect [19,21,26]. In all these series, the doses of STZ were often higher than  
292 500 mg/m<sup>2</sup> for 5 days every 6 weeks. Nonetheless, data provided by the literature are  
293 consistent with those described in our study, showing mainly digestive and  
294 haematological adverse events. Nausea and vomiting are now well controlled with  
295 anti-5HT3 and corticosteroid treatments. Of note, no deaths due to toxicity were  
296 reported in our whole population.

297 The good safety profile was confirmed by treatment compliance. The main  
298 reasons for treatment interruption were similar in the two groups and due to toxicity in  
299 20% of cases. Some investigators used the stop of treatment (even in the event of  
300 grade 1-2 renal toxicity) instead of dose reductions, probably because the dose  
301 adaptations are not well standardised. It could partially contribute to the low level of  
302 heavy renal impairment in our study. Treatment interruptions because of disease  
303 progression were frequent in the RC (41.7%), whereas treatment interruptions for an  
304 objective response and stabilization, as proposed by Moertel *et al.* in 1992 [5],  
305 seemed more frequent in the PC.

306 In terms of efficacy, the objective response for pNETs was about 27%, which  
307 corresponds to the most recent data in the literature with the streptozocin-doxorubicin  
308 combination (ranging from 6 to 39%) [22,27,28]. In our study, disease control was  
309 mainly observed in patients with pNETs and sbNETs. For sbNETs, the ORR was low  
310 (5.5%) and disease control high (100%), but primary tumours in the small bowel are

311 usually less aggressive, and the use of cytotoxics as the first line of treatment is not  
312 currently recommended by European or French guidelines [8,16]. Despite these  
313 guidelines, 11 patients in our cohorts were treated with STZ in the first line. The  
314 tumours were probably considered highly progressive by the investigators.

315 Furthermore, targeted therapies, including single agents, have been evaluated  
316 in this setting and showed that sunitinib and everolimus could be useful, with  
317 response rates of 9.3% and 5%, respectively [6,7]. In addition, these therapies  
318 significantly improved survival parameters compared with placebo. Given the  
319 potential renal toxicity of STZ, the first-line use of targeted therapies could be  
320 envisaged for patients with primary pNETs, even though our study showed that the  
321 risk of renal complications was moderate when treatment with STZ was delivered  
322 carefully. A prospective trial is in progress to confirm this finding [31]: the European  
323 SEQTOR trial, which is investigating the combination of streptozocin-fluorouracil  
324 followed by everolimus in comparison with the inverse sequence, could help  
325 practitioners choose the best strategy for pNETs. The PRODIGE 40 - BETTER 2 is  
326 comparing the combination 5FU-streptozocin versus telozolimide-capecitabine,  
327 associated or not with the anti-angiogenic, bevacizumab, for the treatment of pNETS.  
328 Today, first-line cytotoxics, such as STZ, are not recommended for sbNETS. In these  
329 patients, who are likely to receive several subsequent treatments for their metastatic  
330 disease, it could be of interest to start with a loco-regional hepatic approach  
331 (embolization or chemo-embolization), radionuclide therapy or targeted therapies in  
332 order to reduce cytotoxic adverse effects.

333 In conclusion, STZ is an active antimetabolic chemotherapy drug that has a place  
334 among the treatments for advanced/metastatic well-differentiated pNETs. Our results  
335 highlight that renal toxicity seems to be moderate with a positive benefit/risk ratio in  
336 favour of STZ for patients with adequate renal function before the start of treatment.

337 Its renal toxicity could limit its use in frail patients. The early detection of tubular  
338 toxicity could be obtained by following serum electrolytes, glycosuria,  
339 microalbuminuria and beta-2 microalbuminuria more closely. Adequate hydration  
340 must be provided before and after each dose of STZ and should be recommended  
341 more strongly in the guidelines.

342

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**TABLE 1** Patients' and tumour characteristics in the prospective and retrospective cohorts

Characteristic	Prospective cohort	Retrospective cohort	<i>P</i>
Number of patients	27	84	
Sex, n (%)			0.286
Male	14 (51.9)	54 (64.3)	
Female	13 (48.1)	30 (35.7)	
Age, years			0.08
Mean ( $\pm$ standard deviation)	61.48 ( $\pm$ 13.25)	55.63 ( $\pm$ 12.01)	
Median (range)	65 (32-81)	54.5 (28-81)	
Tumour site, n (%)			0.0897
Pancreas	22 (81.5)	54 (64.3)	
Small bowel	5 (18.5)	18 (21.4)	
Other*	0	12 (14.3)	
Metastases, n (%)	23 (85.2)	78 (92.9)	0.22
Baseline eGFR, ml/min/1.73m <sup>2</sup>			0.77
Mean ( $\pm$ standard deviation)	91.84 ( $\pm$ 24.3)	93.82 ( $\pm$ 25.57)	
Median (range)	84 (60-161.5)	89.65 (47.7-195.5)	
Baseline serum creatinine, $\mu$ mol/L			
Mean ( $\pm$ standard deviation)	74.96 ( $\pm$ 18.76)	77.17 ( $\pm$ 17.67)	
Median (range)	73 (48-107)	75 (41-137)	

\*Colon or rectum 4, stomach 1, gastrinoma 1, metastatic liver without chest abnormality 5, hepatic and pulmonary metastases without visible primary location 1.

**TABLE 2** Description of streptozocin-based chemotherapy in prospective and retrospective cohorts

Treatment characteristics	Prospective cohort	Retrospective cohort	<i>P</i>
Number of patients with data	27	78	
Regimen, n (%)			
500 mg/m <sup>2</sup> d1-d5, q6w	27 (100)	78 (100)	
Combined chemotherapy, n (%)			*0.014
Doxorubicin	18 (66.7)	41 (48.8)	
5 fluorouracil (5-FU)	7 (25.9)	32 (38)	
Epirubicin	2 (7.4)	1 (1.2)	
Doxorubicin then 5-FU	-	3 (3.6)	
5FU + bevacizumab		7 (8.3)	
Number of cycles: median (range)	3 (1-12)	4 (1-17)	0.09
Cycle delay †: n (%)	7 (28) ‡	13 (16.7) ‡	*0.03
Dose reduction: n (%)	1 (3.7) ‡	16 (20.5) ‡	0.05
Cumulative dose: g/m <sup>2</sup>			0.266
Median (range)	7.5 (1.5-15)	8,25(1.5-25.62)	
Main reasons for treatment interruption			
n (%)			
Number of patients	27	84	
Patients with toxicity	6 (22.2)	16 (19.0)	
Disease progression	7 (25.9)	35 (41.7)	
Therapeutic Break	12 (44.4)	28 (33.3)	
Patient's decision	1 (3.3)	1 (1.2)	
Other	1 (3.7) ¶	4 (4.8)	

† More than 50 days between two consecutive cycles.

‡ Number of cycle delay and dose reduction were calculated for the 25 patients having received at least two cycles in the prospective cohort and for the 78 without missing data in the retrospective cohort.

\* Difference between cohorts statistically significant.

¶ Other reasons for treatment interruption in prospective cohort: investigator's decision (n = 1).

▫ Other reasons for treatment interruption in retrospective cohort: cholangitis (n = 1), streptozocin out of stock (n = 1), investigator's decision (n = 2).

**TABLE 3** Changes in renal function during treatment

Parameters	Prospective cohort	Retrospective cohort	<i>P</i>
Change† from baseline to eGFR at last cycle, n (%)			**0.0041
Number of patients	23	68	
<b>Deterioration</b> (eGFR decrease $\geq$ 15 %)	<b>5 (21.7)</b>	<b>25 (36.8)</b>	
Stability	9 (39.1)	37 (54.4)	
Improvement (eGFR increase > 15 %)	9 (39.1)	6 (8.8)	
Change† from baseline to post-treatment eGFR at first follow-up, n (%)			0.06
Number of patients	18	55	
<b>Deterioration</b> (eGFR decrease $\geq$ 15 %)	<b>4 (22.2)</b>	<b>26 (47.3)</b>	
Stability	9 (50.0)	24 (43.6)	
Improvement (eGFR increase > 15 %)	5 (27.8)	5 (9.1)	

† Changes were calculated if both baseline and target values were measured.

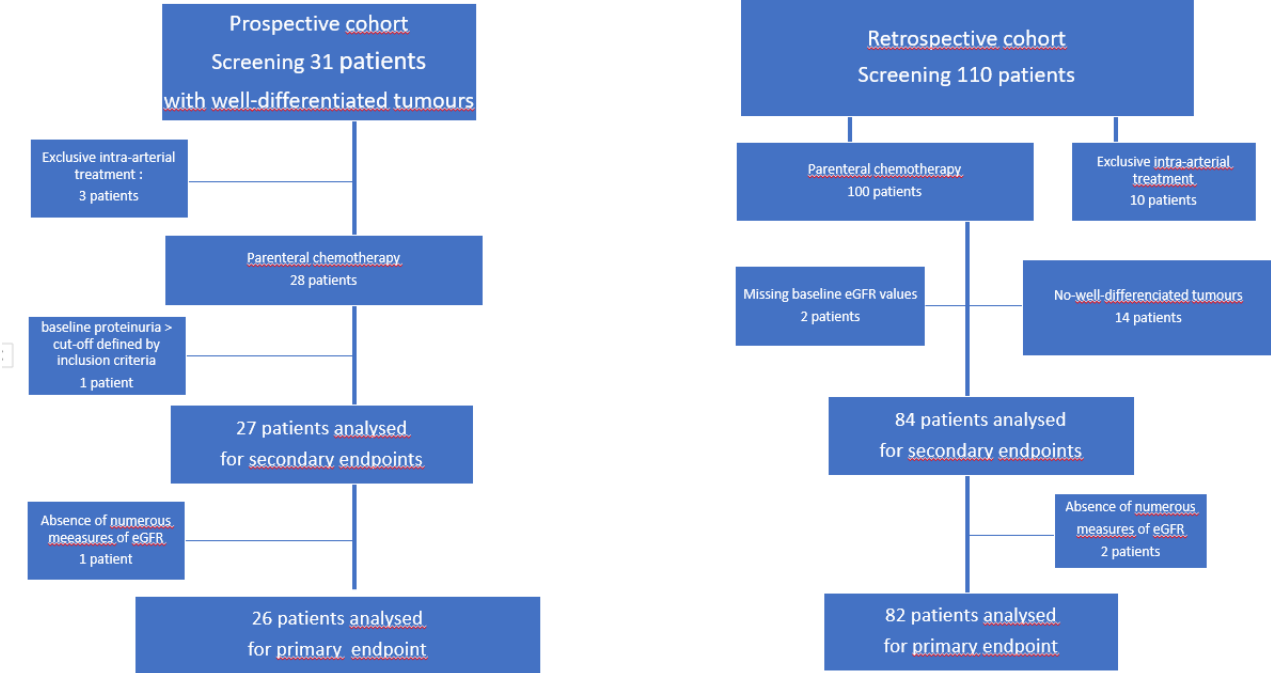
\*\* Difference between cohorts statistically significant.

**TABLE 4** CTC-NCI toxicities occurring during treatment, per patient

Toxicity, n (%)	Prospective cohort (n = 27)		Retrospective cohort (n = 84)	
	All grade	Grade 3-4	All grade	Grade 3-4
All toxicities	16 (59.3)	4 (14.8)	51 (60.7)	13 (15.5)
Digestive	10 (37)	2 (7.4)	35 (41.7)	3 (3.6)
Renal	9 (33.3)	-	30 (35.7)	1 (1.2)*
Haematological/infection	3 (11.1)	1 (3.7)	20 (23.8)	7 (8.3)
Asthenia	2 (7.4)	-	11 (13.1)	-
Liver	1 (3.7)	1 (3.7)	12 (14.3)	2 (2.4)
Anorexia	-	-	1 (1.2)	-
Alopecia	-	-	5 (6.0)	-
Fever	1 (3.7)	-	2 (2.4)	-
Headache	-	-	2 (2.4)	-
Other	3 (11.1)	2 (7.4)	13 (15.5)	2 (2.4)

\*After 3 cycles. No concomitant nephrotoxic treatment. Patient with complete response.

Figure 1. Flow chart



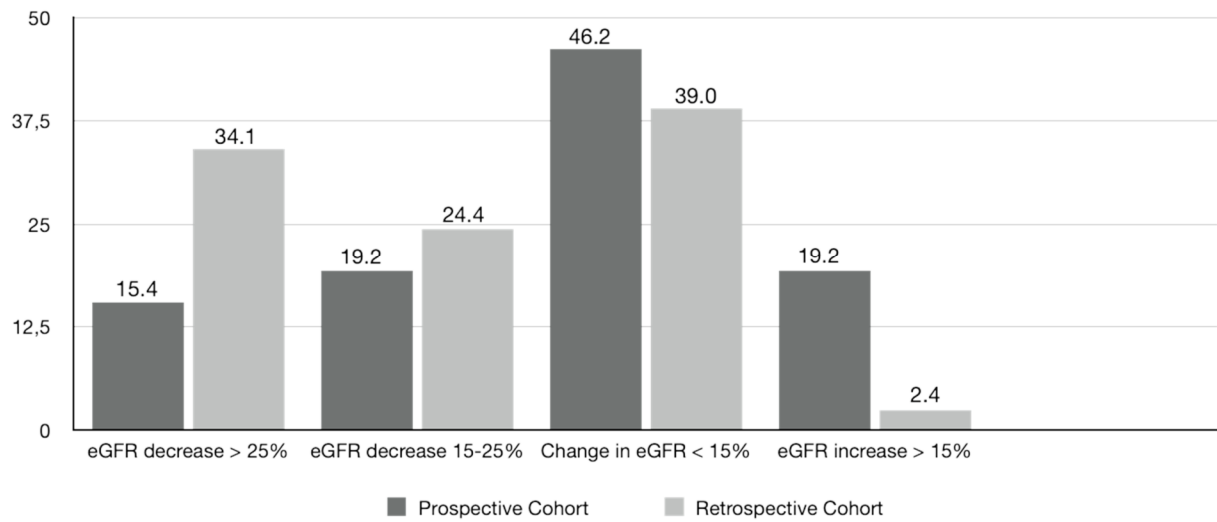


Figure 2. Percentage of patients with eGFR (MDRD) modification in the prospective (N = 26 patients) and retrospective cohort (N = 82 patients) during the treatment or after the last cycle. P-value for comparison of the 2 cohorts: 0.005

Figure 3. Plasma creatinine during and after the treatment cycles.

