ABSTRACT:

This article provides a unique perspective on thymoma by describing the clinical scenarios from 2 diverse patient populations followed by an update. A comparative chart review was conducted on patients diagnosed at 2 university-based hospitals, 1 in the United States and 1 in Thailand. A comprehensive review of the literature was then performed through MEDLINE for articles between 1980 and 2002. During the last 23 years, charts from 16 patients at each institution were available for review. The most common presenting symptoms were myasthenia gravis (47%), dyspnea (25%), and chest discomfort (19%) and are similar to those reported in the literature. The primary treatment of stages I-III disease included surgery with or without radiation. Trimodality therapy with surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy was pursued in 43% of patients with stage IV disease in the United States, whereas no patients from Thailand underwent this regimen. Median overall survivals were 124 and 76 months in the Thai and the US groups, respectively (P = 0.76). No major differences in the clinical features were observed between the 2 institutions, although a trend toward more advanced disease was seen in the United States. Surgery and radiation remain the backbone of treatment, but the role for chemotherapy is increasing.