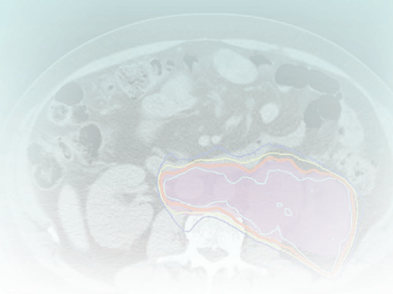


PART J LYMPHOMA AND HEMATOLOGIC MALIGNANCIES

Overview

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BASIC ISSUES IN LYMPHOMA

Significant progress had been made in recent years in the understanding of the molecular basis of lymphomagenesis, and in the diagnosis, staging, treatment, and follow-up of patients with lymphoid malignancies. The current pathological classification incorporates molecular characteristics, in addition to morphologic and clinical features in identifying distinctive subtypes of disease entities.¹ Advances in DNA microarray techniques allow improved prognostic classification of patients and provide the opportunity to develop molecularly targeted therapy for specific disease types.²⁻¹¹ More accurate staging is now available through modern medical imaging techniques and the increasing experience with functional imaging.¹²

The treatment of lymphoid malignancies had also evolved over the years. For diseases in which a high cure rate has already been achieved, the emphasis is now on treatment reduction to reduce late effects. Meanwhile, more dose-dense and dose-intense treatment, and incorporation of targeted therapy including novel agents against molecular targets or pathways, immunotherapy, and radioimmunotherapy are being used in diseases in which the cure rate is still suboptimal.

PATHOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION

The classification of lymphoid malignancies has evolved over the past century. Previous lymphoma classification relied mainly on subtleties of morphology, cell lineage and differentiation, or clinical survival data. In 1994, the International Lymphoma Study Group published the Revised European-American Lymphoma (REAL) classification of tumors of hematopoietic and lymphatic tissues, which was later modified and updated in the World Health Organization (WHO) project.¹³⁻¹⁵ The WHO classification combined information on morphology, immunophenotype, genetic features, and clinical features to define individual disease entity. The 2008 update provided new criteria for the recognition of some previously described neoplasms and clarified the defining criteria for others. Furthermore, it added new entities that were defined by recently discovered genetic features.¹⁶ Despite its seeming complexity, its clinical practicality is supported by the fact that the majority of cases could be classified into one of the disease categories, that an excellent interobserver reproducibility has been demonstrated, and that the disease entities in the classification were indeed clinically distinctive, both at initial presentation and in treatment outcome.

Modern pathological classification allows researchers, pathologists, and clinicians to have a common language in diagnosing and treating different disease types and in comparing treatment results. It is anticipated that with continued progress in the field of genetic analysis, continued updating and revisions of any current classification will be necessary. Advances in the field may provide additional markers for classification, and identify new categories of disease that are not currently recognized.

MOLECULAR BASIS OF LYMPHOID MALIGNANCIES

Emerging data are now available on the origin of the malignant cells of Hodgkin's disease, the Hodgkin's Reed-Sternberg cells, and the molecular events that lead to the malignant transformation.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ The nuclear factor-kappa-B (NF- κ B) pathway has been implicated to play an important role in the pathogenesis of Hodgkin's disease,^{20,21} and continued research in this area may provide new therapeutic targets for the disease.

Researchers have used cDNA microarray techniques to identify molecular prognostic factors for lymphoma.^{2-4,6} For diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL), using transcriptional profiling, subtypes of disease with distinct clinical outcome have been identified.^{2-4,7} Genes that have been implicated in predicting treatment outcome, independent of that of the international prognostic index (IPI), include ones that regulate molecular signaling pathways and apoptotic response to treatment.^{3,4} Using similar techniques, it has also been shown that the tumor microenvironment and host inflammatory response may play a key role in identifying subgroups of patients with differing prognoses in both follicular lymphoma and DLBCL.^{6,22-24} Molecular prognostic factors promise to further improve risk stratification, and more importantly, provide insights into molecular pathogenesis of different subtypes of lymphoma and guide the development of novel, targeted therapy.²⁵

STAGING

Improvement in imaging techniques had led to the modification of the original Ann Arbor staging classification for lymphoma, allowing incorporation of computed tomography (CT) scan results in assessing disease extent.²⁶ Currently, functional imaging is routinely included as part of initial lymphoma staging. The superior accuracy of fludeoxyglucose

(18F)-positron emission tomography (FDG-PET) has been shown to result in a change in the stage of 18% to 45%, and a change in management in 18% to 31% of the patients.¹² Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that incorporation of FDG-PET in radiotherapy planning resulted in modification of target volume and fields in a considerable proportion of patients.²⁷⁻³⁰

TREATMENT

The following is a summary of the overall treatment approaches, with a focus on the role of radiation therapy, for the three types of hematological malignancies: Hodgkin's lymphoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and plasma cell neoplasms.

Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Stages I to II Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Combined modality therapy for early-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma is associated with a cure rate of more than 90%. Currently, one of the main challenges in the management of patients with early-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma is to minimize treatment-related late complications while preserving excellent disease control. Strategies to reduce treatment, from the radiation therapy standpoint, include the use of smaller treatment fields, lower radiation doses, or elimination of radiation therapy.

Over the last several decades, radiation treatment fields for Hodgkin's lymphoma have evolved from extended-field to involved-field,³¹⁻³³ and mostly recently to involved-site/involved node radiotherapy (ISRT/INRT).^{34,35} Retrospective studies have shown that ISRT/INRT as part of combined-modality therapy for early-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma did not result in any marginal misses, and yielded progression-free survival rates of more than 90%.^{36,37} In the EORTC/Lymphoma Study Association (LYSA)/the Italian Lymphoma Foundation (FIL) H10 and H11 trials, INRT was adopted in both the standard and experimental arms, the results of which are pending at this time. In the ongoing German Hodgkin's Study Group (GHSG) HD17 trial for patients with early-stage disease with risk factors, the standard arm consisted of chemotherapy and involved-field radiotherapy, and the experimental arm used INRT for patients with PET-positive disease after chemotherapy.

Radiation dose deescalation from 30 Gy to 20 Gy was explored in the GHSG HD10 and HD11 trials for patients with early-stage, low-risk disease (no bulky mediastinal mass or extranodal disease, less than three nodal sites, low sedimentation rate) and high-risk disease, respectively.^{38,39} In the HD10 trial, at a median follow-up of 7.5 years, there were no differences in 8-year freedom-from-treatment-failure and overall survival between 20 Gy versus 30 Gy after two to four cycles Adriamycin, bleomycin, vinblastine, and dacarbazine (ABVD) chemotherapy.³⁸ This suggests that in patients with low-risk disease as per the GHSG criteria, two cycles followed by 20 Gy of radiotherapy is adequate. In the HD11 trial,³⁹ at a median follow-up of 82 months, there was no significant difference in 5-year freedom-from-treatment-failure rates between baseline bleomycin, etoposide, doxorubicin, cyclophosphamide, vincristine, procarbazine, and prednisone (BEACOPP) and ABVD when followed by 30 Gy of involved-field radiotherapy; however, inferiority of 20 Gy cannot be excluded after four cycles of ABVD, leading to the authors' conclusion that 30 Gy as optimal radiotherapy dose after ABVD for early-stage, unfavorable Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Randomized trials have been performed examining whether radiation therapy can be safely omitted.⁴⁰⁻⁴⁷ The

Cochrane Haematological Malignancies Group conducted a meta-analysis that included five randomized controlled trials comparing chemotherapy alone with identical chemotherapy combined with radiotherapy for patients with stages I to II Hodgkin's lymphoma.⁴⁸ The results showed that, in addition to a significant disease-control benefit favoring the combined-modality therapy approach, there was a highly significant overall survival benefit with the addition of radiation therapy (hazard ratio [HR], 0.4; $p < 0.00001$).

The elimination of radiotherapy based on PET-response or early PET-response to chemotherapy is being explored by a number of randomized trials. In the EORTC/LYSA/FIL H10 and H11 trials, the experimental arms consisted of omission of radiation therapy for patients with complete PET response after two cycles of ABVD, compared against the standard arms of combined-modality therapy. Interim analysis results showed that in both studies, the objective of noninferiority of chemotherapy alone as compared with combined-modality therapy has not been met, and at the recommendation of an independent data monitoring committee, the experimental arms of no radiotherapy in both groups of patients were closed.⁴⁹ The United Kingdom RAPID trial compared combined-modality therapy with chemotherapy alone in early-stage patients with complete PET-response after three cycles of ABVD.⁵⁰ At a median follow up time of 48.6 months, by intent-to-treat analysis, there was no difference between the radiotherapy versus no radiotherapy. However, by per-treatment analysis, there is a significant benefit in the radiotherapy arm (3-year progression-free survival 97% versus 90.7%, $p = 0.03$). Based on these preliminary result, there appears to be a modest, approximately 7% gain in progression-free survival with the addition of radiotherapy on patients who achieved a complete PET response after chemotherapy. This slightly lower cure rate and toxicity of salvage disease needs to be weighed against the limited toxicity of modern radiotherapy. Two ongoing trials conducted by the GHSG are exploring omission of radiotherapy by PET-response, including the HD16 trial for patients with low-risk early-stage disease, and the HD17 trial for patients with early-stage disease with adverse risk factors. Results from the ongoing trials as well as mature results of completed trials are needed to confirm the safety of elimination of radiotherapy in patients with early-stage disease with complete PET response to chemotherapy.

Stages III to IV

The role of radiation therapy in patients with advanced-stage Hodgkin disease is controversial. Most of the randomized trials do not show a significant benefit with the addition of radiation therapy to chemotherapy.⁵¹⁻⁵⁸ However, there are subgroups of patients who may benefit from consolidative radiation therapy, namely, patients who failed to achieve a complete response to chemotherapy and those with bulky disease at presentation.^{52,56,59,60} In a study from the United Kingdom, comparing irradiated versus patients who were nonirradiated with advanced-stage disease recruited on several clinical trials,⁶⁰ at a median follow-up of 6.9 years, a significantly higher progression-free survival (71% versus 86%, $p < 0.0001$) and overall survival rates (87% versus 93%, $p = 0.014$) were found in patients who received radiation therapy, despite the fact that there were significantly more patients with bulky disease and patients with partial response in the irradiated cohort.

The GHSG HD12 trial is a four-arm study for patients with bulky stage IIB and stages III to IV disease comparing two different BEACOPP variants with or without radiation therapy.⁵⁸ At a median follow-up of 69 months, there was no significant difference in 5-year FFTF between the radiotherapy or no-radiotherapy arms (90.4% versus 87%, $p = 0.08$). However,

on subgroup analysis, among patients with residual disease of >1.5 cm, there was a significantly higher (5.8%; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.0% to 10.7%) 5-year freedom-from-treatment failure in the radiotherapy arm. However, among patients with <1.5-cm residual disease after chemotherapy, there was no significant benefit with the addition of radiotherapy even among patients with initial disease of 5 cm or greater.

In the GHSG HD15 trial,⁶¹ patients with advanced-stage disease with complete response or with residual disease <2.5 cm after chemotherapy received no further treatment, whereas patients with residual disease of 2.5 cm or greater underwent PET scanning. Radiotherapy was administered only in patients with residual PET-avid disease, and as such only 11% of patients on this trial received radiotherapy. The planning target volume in this trial included the PET-positive residual disease with a 1.5-cm expansion. The 4-year progression-free survival of patients who achieved a complete response to chemotherapy and did not receive radiation therapy was 92.1%. It is noteworthy, however, that this excellent outcome was based on patients treated with variants of BEACOPP regimens and may not be applicable to patients treated with ABVD. In the response-adapted trials conducted by the GITIL and FIL (HD0607 and HD0801) for patients with advanced-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma, patients with complete PET-response after ABVD chemotherapy, patients were randomized to radiotherapy versus no-radiotherapy. The results of these two trials will clarify the role of consolidative radiotherapy in patients with advanced-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma with complete PET-response after ABVD chemotherapy.

Nodular Lymphocyte Predominant Hodgkin's Disease

Nodular lymphocyte predominant Hodgkin's disease (NLPHD) is a disease entity distinct from classical Hodgkin's disease based on its morphologic, immunophenotypic, and clinical characteristics.^{14,62} The majority of cases of NLPHD present with stages I to II disease. Different management options exist⁶³⁻⁶⁷; however, radiation therapy alone remains the mainstay treatment for patients with localized disease. Studies have shown that as treatment fields evolved from extended- to involved-field radiation therapy, there was no significant compromise of disease control. The current recommendation is further field reduction to ISRT to 30 Gy to 36 Gy. In the setting of radiotherapy as the only treatment modality, the clinical target volume (CTV) should encompass gross disease as well as suspected subclinical disease.³⁴

Patients with additional relapses tend to remain responsive to further therapy. These patients are more likely to die from treatment-related causes than from the lymphoma, which argues for limiting treatment upfront because of the indolent nature of the disease.

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is a heterogeneous disease. The two most common histologic subtypes are DLBCL and follicular lymphoma, accounting for three quarters of all cases of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The role of radiation therapy in both of these subtypes is mostly limited to patients with early-stage disease. Marginal zone lymphoma or mucosa-associated lymphoid tumor (MALT) is another subtype of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which is highly responsive to radiation therapy, and in patients who present with localized, early-stage disease, radiation therapy alone may be curative.

Diffuse Large B-Cell Lymphoma

Randomized trials have compared chemotherapy alone versus combined modality therapy in early-stage aggressive

non-Hodgkin's lymphoma with mixed results, likely as a result of patient selection and differences in chemotherapy regimens used in the comparison arms in two of the trials. However, the most significant limitation of these trials was that they were conducted in the pre-Rituximab era.⁶⁸⁻⁷¹

The current standard systemic therapy for DLBCL, which accounts for the majority of cases of aggressive non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, is rituximab, cyclophosphamide, vincristine and prednisone (R-CHOP).⁷²⁻⁷⁵ Several studies have retrospectively compared irradiated versus nonirradiated patients after modern R-CHOP chemotherapy, all showing a significantly superior disease-free survival in patients who received radiotherapy compared to patients treated with chemotherapy alone.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁹ In the largest study, from M. D. Anderson on 469 patients with DLBCL, not only a significantly higher progression-free (59% versus 82%, $p < 0.001$), but also overall survival (68% versus 91%, $p = 0.03$) rates were observed in irradiated patients. The significant benefit of radiation therapy in this study persisted on multivariable analysis, as well as on matched-pair analyses on patients with stages I to II disease and patients with stages III to IV disease, respectively, after a complete response to six to eight cycles of R-CHOP.

The German High-Grade Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma Study Group (DSHNHL) recently published their experience on the role of radiotherapy in selected patients with DLBCL on their clinical trials.^{80,81} The first report took patients with skeletal involvement and complete response to chemo from the MabThera International Trial (MInT) and RICOVER-60 trials, and found that those who received consolidative radiotherapy had a significantly improved 3-year event-free survival rate (75% versus 36%, $p < 0.001$).⁸¹ On multivariable analysis, the addition of radiotherapy reduced the risk of an event by 70% ($p < 0.001$). In the second report, patients with bulky disease (≥ 7.5 cm) from the R-CHOP-14 for six arms of the RICOVER-60 trial formed the study population. It was found that compared to patients who did not receive radiotherapy, those who received radiotherapy had significantly improved event-free survival (80% versus 54%, $p = 0.001$), progression-free survival (88% versus 62%, $p < 0.001$), as well as overall survival (90% versus 65%, $p = 0.001$).⁸⁰ However, both of these studies were retrospective subgroup analyses and may be prone to selection bias. The UNFOLDER trial, also conducted by the DSHNHL randomized patients with DLBCL to R-CHOP14 versus R-CHOP 21. Patients with initial bulky disease (> 7.5 cm) or extranodal involvement and complete response to chemotherapy were further randomized to receive radiotherapy versus no radiotherapy. In the most recent interim analysis, the no-radiotherapy arm was closed because of significantly inferior event-free survival results. The formal results of this trial, however, are still pending at this time.

Radiation doses used in previous trials ranged from 30 Gy to as high as 55 Gy.⁸² In a prospective trial conducted by Lowry et al,⁸³ 640 sites of aggressive non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (81% treated with combined-modality therapy) were randomized to 30 Gy in 15 fractions versus 40 Gy to 45 Gy in 20 to 23 fractions. At a median follow-up of 5.6 years, there was no significant difference in freedom-from-local progression and overall survival rates between the two arms, suggesting the 30 Gy may be adequate in these patients after chemotherapy. However, the study did not describe the types of chemotherapy used and data on response to chemotherapy were not available.

There have been attempts to limit radiation fields in patients receiving consolidative radiotherapy for aggressive non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Campbell et al reported on the British Columbia experience of using INRT ≤ 5 cm and found no difference in patterns of failure compared with a previous cohort of patients who received involved-field radiation therapy.⁸⁴ Verhappen et al recently reported on results of 67 patients

with stages I to II aggressive non-Hodgkin's lymphoma treated with INRT (64 of 67 patients received combined-modality therapy) as per the EORTC guidelines,⁸⁵ and there was only one relapse that was outside the INRT field but in the involved-field radiation therapy volume, supporting the use of more limited fields after chemotherapy in early-stage aggressive non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Follicular Lymphoma

About 20% to 25% of patients with follicular lymphoma present with stages I to II disease. There have been a number of retrospective series showing that radiation therapy alone is curative in 35% to 40% of cases.⁸⁶⁻⁹⁵ Median doses of 36 Gy to 40 Gy resulted in control rates of 90% to 95%. Relapses beyond 10 years are uncommon, accounting for less than 5% of cases. In most series the radiation fields varied over time, with larger fields employed in the earlier years, and more limited fields in patients treated in the modern era. Campbell et al reported on the British Columbia experience of 95 with localized follicular lymphoma treated with INRT <5 cm alone, and found that only 1% of patients had regional-only recurrence.⁹⁶ Because more than half the patients with stages I to II disease will eventually relapse, the use of more limited radiation fields preserves the ability to effectively treat patients with recurrent disease or those who transform to a higher grade histology.

In most of the earlier retrospective series of radiotherapy alone for stages I to II follicular lymphoma, doses of 35 Gy to 40 Gy were employed. Lowry et al from the United Kingdom conducted a randomized trial on 361 sites of indolent lymphoma comparing 24 Gy in 12 fractions versus 40 Gy to 45 Gy in 20 to 30 fractions,⁸³ and found no differences in rates of local progression, progression-free survival, and overall survival between the two arms, suggesting that 24 Gy may be an adequate definitive dose for indolent lymphoma.

For patients with advanced-stage follicular lymphoma, several small series, which included patients with stage III disease, have reported results on the use of "central" or "comprehensive" lymphoid irradiation, with 10-year to 15-year disease-free survival of 30% to 40%.⁹⁷⁻⁹⁹ Molecular complete responses, assessed by polymerase chain reaction techniques, have also been demonstrated after the treatment.¹⁰⁰ This approach of wide-field radiation therapy, however, is not widely accepted because of concerns with long-term toxicity for the treatment for an indolent disease and the ability to deliver effective salvage therapy at the time of relapse. Emerging data are available on the effectiveness of low-dose IFRT for palliation in patients with indolent lymphoma, with response rates of 80% to more than 90%.¹⁰¹⁻¹⁰⁷ The advantages of this approach, in addition to the high response rate, include minimal treatment toxicity, patient convenience, potential delay in need of starting systemic therapy, and the option of reirradiation if needed. However, results of the recently published FoRT trial showed that 4 Gy in 2 fractions was significantly inferior to 24 Gy in 12 fractions in patients with either follicular or marginal zone lymphoma in terms of response rates (81% versus 74.1%, $p = 0.006$), and 2-year progression-free survival rates (93.7% versus 80.4%, $p < 0.001$) in the 4 Gy-arm.¹⁰⁸ These findings led to the conclusion that although 4 Gy in 2 fractions remains a useful regimen in the palliative setting, 24 Gy is the standard dose for patients treated with radical intent.

MALT Lymphoma

Marginal zone B-cell lymphoma (MALT) accounts for about 8% to 10% of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The majority of cases are localized at presentation and tend to remain localized for long periods of time. This subtype of lymphoma is highly responsive to radiation therapy. Doses of around 30 Gy to

involved nodal regions or extranodal sites will yield local control rate of close to 100%, with a chance of long-term cure in about three quarters of the patients,¹⁰⁹⁻¹¹⁴ although results from the United Kingdom randomized trial suggested that 24 Gy may be adequate.⁸³ Relapses tend to occur at other extranodal sites in which MALT lymphomas tend to occur or in a nonirradiated contralateral paired organ.¹¹⁵ The likelihood of achieving a second remission in patients with limited relapses remains excellent with further local radiation therapy.

Multiple Myeloma and Plasma Cell Malignancies

Multiple myeloma at this time remains an incurable disease. However, novel agents including bortezomib and lenalidomide have been shown to be effective in the relapsed setting, and they are increasingly being adopted as first-line therapy.^{116,117} Additional novel agents, including pomalidomide, a new immunomodulatory agent, and carfilzomib, an irreversible proteasome inhibitor, have shown promising anti-myeloma activity in patients with refractory disease.^{118,119} Finally, monoclonal antibodies are emerging as an important modality in the treatment of the disease.^{120,121}

The current role of radiation therapy in the management of multiple myeloma is therefore largely limited to palliation, in patients with painful bony lesions, nerve root or cord compression, or lytic lesions in a weight-bearing bone at risk for pathological fractures. Kyphoplasty in conjunction with radiation therapy for patients with compression fracture of the vertebral bodies may provide more immediate and effective palliation.¹²²⁻¹²⁴ Fractionation schemes of 30 Gy in 10 fractions or other biological equivalent doses are recommended because lower doses are associated with less durable palliation, and retreatment is often less effective.¹²⁵⁻¹²⁹

Solitary plasmacytoma accounts for 5% to 10% of all plasma cell dyscrasias. In patients with solitary plasmacytoma of the bone, local radiation therapy to doses of 45 Gy to 50 Gy can provide effective local control of more than 80%.¹³⁰⁻¹³⁶ However, about half of the patients will progress to multiple myeloma at 10 years, and by 15 years, most will develop multiple myeloma. Unlike solitary plasmacytoma of the bone, extraosseous solitary plasmacytoma is associated with a lower risk of progression to multiple myeloma and has a more favorable disease-free survival.^{133,135,137-139} Most series employed doses of 45 Gy to 50 Gy, which yielded local control rates of 85% to 90%.

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