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REVIEWS

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Rare Diseases, Tough Choices

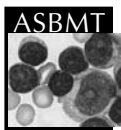
Jack W. Hsu, John R. Wingard

The management of mantle cell lymphoma and T-cell lymphoma remains a challenge for many oncologists. Unlike the more common follicular or diffuse-large B-cell lymphomas, there is a paucity of prospective controlled trials, and there are no standards for the management of these diseases. Practice patterns can vary considerably from center to center.

The rarity of these diseases makes development of consensus guidelines difficult. Most centers see only a handful of these patients. Retrospective analyses may provide insight into the effectiveness of current regimens compared to historical controls, but they are hampered by low patient numbers, and extended enrollment times and results must be interpreted cautiously. Registry analysis allows the aggregation of patients from multiple centers but suffers from lack of consistency in treatment. Prospective trials require the use of multiple centers or cooperative groups to obtain meaningful patient numbers.

This problem is, ironically, further compounded by our increased understanding of the biology of these lymphomas because as we learn more, we recognize subsets that behave very differently. Identification of histologic and molecular targets may allow us to define a subtype that is more sensitive or resistant to a particular treatment regimen and develop novel therapies. However, competition among newer agents for a limited pool of patients can increase the difficulty of developing newer therapies. New drugs and drug combinations that may be helpful have not been adequately tested.

Despite these difficulties, some lessons have been learned about management. These issues were addressed in a satellite symposium held in February 2011 at the BMT Tandem meeting in Honolulu, HI. The presenters review the available information on the management of mantle cell lymphoma and T-cell lymphoma and illustrate the challenges clinicians face when determining the optimal treatment for patients with these rare lymphoma subtypes.



Symposium Report

Updates on and Controversies in Transplantation and Non-Transplantation Options for Lymphoma

Adapted from a continuing medical education symposium presented at the 2011 BMT Tandem Meetings on February 17, 2011, in Honolulu, Hawaii.
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Program Overview

Mantle cell lymphoma is a disease for which aggressive therapy has become the standard approach and has resulted in marked improvement in disease-free and overall survival over the past 10 years. Unfortunately, long-term follow-up of several trials suggests that patients may continue to relapse 5 years or more beyond initial treatment, even after therapy that includes autologous stem cell transplantation. The community of practicing transplantation physicians will benefit from a better understanding of the role of new approaches to non-transplantation therapies, as well as the inclusion of autologous and allogeneic transplantations, and maintenance therapies in the overall approach to these patients. T-cell lymphomas represent a heterogeneous spectrum of aggressive and indolent non-Hodgkin's lymphomas. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently completed a re-classification of these diseases that can be treated aggressively with transplantation or less intensive single agent chemotherapy or immunotherapy such as anti-T-cell receptor therapy. Speakers will review the new classification schema and describe new agents for these diseases as well as prognostic factors that will help attendees to determine the optimal treatment approaches for individual patients.

This program aims to provide a forum to discuss the current standard of care for patients with mantle cell and T-cell lymphomas, review the efficacy of conventional with emerging treatment options, and analyze the role of both transplantation and non-transplantation therapies for the treatment of MCL and T-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Target Audience

The program will be oriented to a targeted audience of physicians and medical care professionals specializing in oncology, hematology, immunology, and microbiology.

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, participants should be able to:

- Analyze new data on non-transplantation therapies for mantle cell lymphoma.
- Compare the roles of transplantation as initial therapy for mantle cell lymphoma and transplantation as salvage therapy for mantle cell lymphoma.
- Describe the value of stem cell transplantation for T-cell lymphomas.

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as available literature on any product or device mentioned in this program.

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Thomas C. Shea, MD, does not have any relevant financial relationships with any commercial interests.

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