Comment:
Defining cure in primary CNS lymphoma

Primary CNS lymphoma (PCNSL), a type of extranodal non-Hodgkin lymphoma, is a potentially curable brain cancer. Ongoing randomized trials assessing treatments for PCNSL will ultimately establish a standard of care. Until that time, practitioners have multiple treatment options from which to choose. In this report, the authors provide long-term follow-up data from a phase 2 clinical trial in newly diagnosed PCNSL patients, ages 18–70, treated with MATILDE chemotherapy followed by whole-brain radiation therapy (WBRT). The MATILDE regimen, like all induction chemotherapy currently utilized for PCNSL, includes methotrexate, the single most effective agent against PCNSL. Following chemotherapy, patients received a consolidative WBRT dose based on their initial response to chemotherapy.

Eight of 41 patients treated with MATILDE were alive >10 years from diagnosis and were likely cured of their lymphoma. Relative to the overall study population, these patients were younger and had better functional status at the time of initial PCNSL diagnosis. While detailed neuropsychological and quality of life status were lacking in these participants, only 1 long-term survivor had severely compromised cognition and 5 were working. It is noteworthy that these results are comparable to the proportion of long-term PCNSL survivors achieved using either less aggressive or more aggressive treatment regimens. As long-term survival is now feasible with several treatments for PCNSL, it is critical to employ regimens that minimize the risk of delayed neurotoxicity. To this end, there are neuropsychological instruments now available that are more useful in the assessment of delayed neurotoxicity than the Mini-Mental State Examination used in this report. Furthermore, given the potential for late relapse in PCNSL, all prospective clinical trials should routinely report 10-year follow-up results. Such reports, like the present one, will allow more accurate assessment of cure rates, delayed neurotoxicity, and quality of life.


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