

Doctors team up to spot graft-versus-host disease

Correct diagnosis is key to helping patients feel better



Doctors should team up to diagnose acute graft-versus-host disease, or AGVHD, more accurately. That's according to new research.

AGVHD is one of the most common complications after blood or marrow transplant (BMT). AGVHD can start in the first 3 months after BMT but sometimes occurs later. About 90% (9 out of 10 patients) have symptoms that may indicate AGVHD after BMT.

AGVHD symptoms include:

- Rash
- Diarrhea
- Nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite
- Jaundice (a liver problem that causes temporary yellowing of skin and eyes)

There is no blood test for AGVHD, and its symptoms are similar to many other diseases. So, it can be hard to diagnose AGVHD. But it's important for doctors to diagnose AGVHD correctly, so they can give patients the right medicines to help.

In a clinical trial, doctors observed about 1,600 people who had BMT in the US during 2013-2016. The trial included people of all ages, with diseases, such as leukemia, lymphoma, and aplastic anemia.

Often, only a patient's own transplant doctor detects AGVHD. But this study used a team of 10 transplant doctors from different medical centers. The doctors met regularly and helped each other decide whether patients had AGVHD or other problems.

At first, 60% of patients were thought to have AGVHD. But after doctors teamed up to look more closely, only 50% of patients actually had AGVHD.

This is important, because it helps doctors choose the best medicines for patients and make sure that only patients who have AGVHD will be treated for it.

What's next

Doctors hope someday to find a test for AGVHD. In the meantime, teamwork can help. If you have symptoms after BMT, ask your doctor:

- What caused these symptoms?
- What are the best treatments for me?

Learn more about

- [GVHD basics](#) at Be The Match
- More [study summaries](#) at CIBMTR
- [GVHD trials](#) at Clinical Trials Search and Support

Source

Reshef R, Saber W, Bolaños-Meade J, et al. [Acute GVHD Diagnosis and Adjudication in a Multicenter Trial: A Report from the BMT CTN 1202 Biorepository Study](#). Journal of Clinical Oncology. 2021;39(17):1878-87. Epub 2021/01/29. PMC8260916. doi:10.1200/jco.20.00619.

Clinical Trial ID: BMT CTN 1202, [ClinicalTrials.gov NCT01879072](#)

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About this research summary

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