The number of allogeneic transplants for people age 70 years and older are increasing, and outcomes are improving

What were researchers trying to learn?

Researchers wanted to learn about trends and results of blood and marrow transplant (BMT) for older adults with blood cancers. Specifically, they looked at people age 70 years or older who had allogeneic BMT. Allogeneic BMT uses blood-forming cells from a donor or umbilical cord blood.

The study looked at more than 1,100 people who got BMT between 2000 and 2013 at more than 100 transplant centers in the United States (US). The researchers compared results in 2 groups of patients: 1) people who got transplant between 2000 and 2007 and 2) people who got transplant between 2008 and 2013. By studying these groups, they could find out the trends of transplant activity in this age group and if people are doing better over time.

It's important to find out how many older people get BMT because many blood cancers are more common in older people. For example, the average age that someone is diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) is 70 years. Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) are another common reason to get BMT.

What did they find?

Researchers found that more people age 70 and older are getting allogeneic BMT in the US. That's according to 103 transplant centers reporting information to this study. In 2000, only 5 older patients got BMT. By the year 2013, that number had risen to almost 300 older people. This shows that doctors have learned a lot in the past decade, and that they believe transplants are safe for people age 70 and older.

Older people are now more likely to get BMT because doctors use lower doses of chemotherapy (chemo) to prepare patients for transplant. These reduced-intensity chemo treatments are less stressful on the body. In this study, about 9 out of 10 people (88%) got reduced-intensity BMT.

Researchers also found that BMT results have gotten better between 2000 and 2013. More people were alive 2 years after transplant. Also, fewer people had their disease come back (relapse) or get worse.

Transplant Years	**2000 – 2007**	**2008 – 2013**
Alive 2 years after transplant	• 26% (almost 3 out of 10 people)	• 39% (about 4 out of 10 people)
Alive with no signs of disease	• 22% (about 2 out of 10 people)	• 32% (about 3 out of 10 people)

Important Points:

- **More older people got BMT between 2000 and 2013.**
- **BMT results for older people have gotten better between 2000 and 2013.**

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Research News

People age 70 years and older are doing better after BMT

Why is this important?

This study tells doctors that older people can be successfully treated with BMT. It also means that reduced-intensity chemo before BMT can work well in people age 70 years and older.

Many research studies in the last 10 years have shown that there shouldn't be an age limit on BMT. In other words, transplant doctors shouldn't just look at someone's age to decide if BMT is a treatment option. Doctors should also look at a person's overall health, including how well their heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys work.

What else should I keep in mind about this study?

The results of research studies are always limited in what they can and can't tell you. In this study, the researchers didn't compare results between older people who got BMT and older people who only got chemo. So, there's no way to know if people would have been better off with BMT or chemo.

Questions to ask your doctor

If you're 70 or older and are considering a transplant, you may want to ask:

- Will I get reduced-intensity or standard-intensity BMT?
- How much experience does this hospital have treating people my age?
- What factors about me or my disease might affect how I do after transplant?

Learn more about

- This research study
- Talking with another older adult who had a BMT

Source

Muffly L, Pasquini M, Martens M, et al. Increasing use of allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation in patients aged 70 years and older in the United States. Blood. 2017 Aug 31; 130(9):1156-1164. doi:10.1182/blood-2017-03-772368. Epub 2017 Jul 3. PMC5580273.

About this research summary

Ground-breaking research into blood and marrow transplant is happening every day. That research is having a significant impact on the survival and quality of life of thousands of transplant patients. But the research is written by scientists for scientists. By providing research news in an easy-to-understand way, patients, caregivers, and families have access to useful information that can help them make treatment decisions.

This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of the CIBMTR® (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research®). The CIBMTR is a research collaboration between the National Marrow Donor Program®/Be The Match® and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

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