Guidelines for transplant and multiple myeloma

What did researchers want to share?

The researchers wanted to share information about how transplant can treat multiple myeloma (a type of blood cancer).

Research has helped doctors learn how transplant can treat multiple myeloma. For this article, the authors carefully read this research from the past 13 years. Then they wrote these guidelines to help doctors care for patients with multiple myeloma.

What did they find?

This article helps doctors answer these questions:

- How can doctors help patients decide when to have an autologous transplant? (An autologous transplant uses the patient's own blood-forming cells to replace the unhealthy ones.)
  - The researchers learned that an autologous transplant is best after a patient has had 1 type of treatment.
  - They also learned that an early autologous transplant may be better than waiting. But they need more research to know this for sure.

- What factors should doctors think about before recommending transplant?
  - The researchers learned that a patient's age should not prevent a patient from having an autologous transplant. But they learned that a patient's overall health is important for doctors to consider.
  - Doctors need more research to learn if special tests (cytogenetics) will help doctors know which patients should get an autologous transplant.

- Is it better for patients to have 2 transplants in a row?
  - Doctors don't know for sure if 2 transplants in a row will help patients with multiple myeloma. This type of treatment may help some patients, but not others.

- What type of treatment do patients need after an autologous transplant?
  - Researchers learned that some treatment after autologous transplant helps patients live longer. Some patients should get bone strengthening medicines after transplant. Doctors should also watch patients closely for any new signs or symptoms.

- Should patients ever have an allogeneic transplant? (An allogeneic transplant uses health blood-forming cells from a donor to replace the patient's unhealthy ones.)
  - Doctors shouldn't recommend an allogeneic transplant before a patient has an autologous transplant. It's not clear if there are other ways an allogeneic transplant may help patients with multiple myeloma. This type of transplant may help some patients, but there may also be higher risks.

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Research News

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Important Point:

Doctors should consider recommending an autologous transplant for most patients with multiple myeloma.

Why is this important?

This will help doctors recommend the best treatment options for patients with multiple myeloma.

What else should I keep in mind about this report?

The results of research studies are always limited in what they can and can't tell you. Medicines and treatment options are different now than they were 10 or 20 years ago, when some of the studies took place. Also, some of the studies didn't include very many patients. So it's hard to know whether the results are true for other people.

Also, in the past researchers looked at how long a patient lived after transplant. Now researchers are also trying to learn about a patient's quality of life after transplant. This means they are studying things like a patient's energy level, ability to sleep, and relationships. These are all important things for patients to think about when choosing the best treatment for multiple myeloma.

Questions to ask your doctor

If you have multiple myeloma and are considering transplant, you may want to ask:

- What are the risks of waiting or trying other treatments before a transplant?
- Do I have any risk factors that might affect how I do after a transplant?
- What can you tell me about my quality of life if I get a transplant? If I don't?

Learn more about

- This research study
- Transplant and multiple myeloma

Source

Shah N, Callander N, Ganguly S, et al. Hematopoietic stem cell transplantation for multiple myeloma: Guidelines from the ASBMT. Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation. Epub 2015 Mar 11.

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