Emergencies in Pediatric Oncology
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To our patients and their families who teach us the essence of life every day:

Do not look back in the past or plan for the future; live life to the fullest today!
Preface

The purpose of this book is to give pediatric residents, oncology fellows, and nurses a short and practical guideline to handle the most common emergencies in pediatric oncology. It considers the standard of care for workup of new diagnosis and guidance through emergencies. The multidisciplinary approach of diagnosis and treatment is emphasized through the authors from different disciplines.

We would like to thank our chapter authors for their ideas, time, and knowledge devoted to this project. Special thank you to Donna MacKenzie for the formatting work on the whole book.

We hope that this book will provide answers and guidance for the health care professionals in our field.

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## Contents

1 **Introduction: Pediatric Oncology** ................................................................. 1
   Katrin Scheinemann

2 **Initial Management of New Diagnosis** .................................................. 5
   Katrin Scheinemann

3 **Tumor Lysis Syndrome** ........................................................................ 13
   Hanna Tseitlin

4 **Mediastinal Mass and Superior Vena Cava Syndrome** .......................... 25
   Katrin Scheinemann

5 **Abdominal Masses** ............................................................................. 31
   Katrin Scheinemann

6 **Spinal Cord Compression and Cauda Equina Syndrome** ...................... 37
   Katrin Scheinemann

7 **Fever and Neutropenia** ....................................................................... 43
   Stephanie Cox

8 **Procedures** ....................................................................................... 55
   Katrin Scheinemann

9 **Blood and Blood Product Transfusions** .............................................. 63
   Stephanie Cox

10 **Thromboembolism in Children with Cancer** ...................................... 71
    Uma Athale and Anthony Chan

11 **Cerebral Sinovenous Thrombosis in Children with Cancer** ............... 83
    Uma Athale and Anthony Chan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Central Venous Line-related Thrombosis</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uma Athale and Anthony Chan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chemotherapeutic Drugs</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paula MacDonald</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Supportive Care</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paula MacDonald</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Abdominal Complications</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hanna Tseitlin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Emergency Radiation Therapy in Pediatric Oncology</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laurence Masson-Côté, David C. Hodgson,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara-Ann Millar, and Normand J. Laperriere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Chapter 1
Introduction: Pediatric Oncology

Katrin Scheinemann

Keywords  APON • Childhood cancer registry • Clinical trials • Hospice • Odilie Schweisguth • Palliative care • Sidney Farber • SIOP • Supportive care

Pediatric oncology can be considered a very young discipline within pediatrics. For a long time, children with cancer were treated by a surgeon, a general practitioner, or a radiologist and the outcome was dismal. But looking back into history gives an idea about the groundwork.

In the year 1647, Antonj van Leeuwenhock invented the microscope in Delft (The Netherlands), and suddenly, morphology of human tissue/ fluids could be studied [1]. It took over two centuries until Paul Ehrlich from Germany performed and described a blood smear – still a very important diagnostic tool. In 1929, Max Wintote defined the red cell indices (MCV, MCHC, and MCH) which subsequently led to further description of anemia. The first differential blood count was done by Wallace Coulton – the discipline pediatric hematology was born.

However, it needed two pioneers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean for the development of pediatric oncology: Odilie Schweisguth from France and Sidney Farber from the United States. Odilie Schweisguth was one of the first females to complete a medical degree, which she obtained in 1936 in Paris following a nursing career [2]. She was considered as the first European pediatric oncologist in 1948 and founded the first pediatric oncology ward at the Institute Gustave Roussy (IGR), France’s leading cancer center, in 1952. This ward’s concept also included a palliative care room as well as a separate room for nurses and physicians. Her research focus was on aftercare and survivorship. She also was a strong advocate for her discipline which led to the initiation of the advanced course on pediatric leukemia and cancer, established in 1954, and the founding of SIOP (International Society of
Pediatric Oncology) in 1968. Following the SIOP foundation, multiple other professional organizations have been established, as shown in Table 1.1.

Sidney Farber, on the other hand, worked as a pathologist at the Children’s Hospital in Boston [3]. A recent discovery that folic acid stimulated leukemia cell growth and disease progression led to the idea of a clinical trial to use folic acid antagonist for remission achievement. This trial, considered as the first chemotherapeutic trial, got published in the New England Journal of Medicine 1948. Temporary remission was achieved in 10 out of 16 participants. Sidney Farber founded the first comprehensive pediatric oncology treatment center at Boston Children’s Hospital. Quite early, he recognized that advancing treatment would only occur with increasing research, so a cancer research foundation was established. He was a strong supporter of multidisciplinary care and invented the multidisciplinary tumor board.

In 1974, the first American pediatric hematology/oncology board exam was held and a new discipline was born [1]. Since then, multiple accredited programs for pediatric hematology/oncology have been established all over the world. International and multi-institutional cooperative therapy groups have been established, and scientific journals in this area have been founded. Multiple professional online information and teaching tools are also available in our days, as outlined in Table 1.2.

Similar to the organizational development on the physician site, an accreditation process on the nursing site took place [4]. Initially, they were referred to as “tumor therapy nurses” and were not allowed to share the diagnosis with their patients or parents. The first oncology nursing and nurse practitioner program were established at St. Jude’s Research Hospital in Memphis. The association of pediatric oncology nurses (APON) was founded in 1974. The first certification of pediatric oncology nursing (CPON) took place in 1995.

Each year, over 264,000 children are diagnosed with a malignancy worldwide, with over 80% of them in a low-income country. Presumably, the number is much

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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</tr>
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higher as a large number of patients in low-income countries may never get diagnosed and will die without an established diagnosis. Leading diagnoses in high-income countries are leukemias, followed by CNS tumors. Most of the high-income countries have established a childhood cancer registry, keeping track of incidences, potential clusters, treatment, and outcome. Incidences have risen over the past decades, but this is biased by better and more complete registry as well as better diagnostic tools. The biggest hospitals have established subdivisions due to the high number of patients: leukemia/lymphoma, solid tumors, neurooncology, and stem cell transplant. With ongoing treatment advances and the long-term goal of targeted treatment, the prognosis and outcome have changed dramatically. Sixty years ago, only children with a “surgically curable” cancer would have survived their disease. Now, over two-thirds of all children in high-income countries are expected to become long-term survivors – this has lead to a special new subdiscipline of aftercare. Children, adolescents, young adults, and adults are monitored for long-term treatment sequelae, as well as secondary malignancies. But the prognosis has also changed dramatically with the recent advance in supportive care. The availability of blood transfusions and G-SCF, broad-spectrum antibiotics, and the concept of prophylactic antibiotic use have been key players in the reduction of morbidity. The invention of central venous access via port-a-cath or Broviac catheter has made the administration and monitoring of chemotherapy much safer and easier. Finally, different antiemetic drugs have tackled one of the most common but most uncomfortable general side effects: nausea and emesis.

Childhood cancer survivors have now become parents – one of the biggest success stories within medical history. But with the increasing number of childhood cancer survivors, their aftercare also needs to be better organized to monitor their long-term sequelae.

One of the reasons for this success is the effort to treat the majority of children on multicenter clinical trials. All major study groups worldwide (e.g., Children’s

### Table 1.2 Further online information

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<th>Webpage</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cure4Kids</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cure4kids.org">www.cure4kids.org</a></td>
<td>Continuing medical education focusing on cancer, pediatrics, oncology, and global communication tools</td>
</tr>
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<td>The International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organizations</td>
<td><a href="http://www.icccpo.org">www.icccpo.org</a></td>
<td>Information about parent organization around the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric Oncology Education Material (POEM)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pedsoncologyeducation.com">www.pedsoncologyeducation.com</a></td>
<td>Wide range of articles relevant to childhood cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cure search for Children’s cancer</td>
<td><a href="http://www.curesearch.org">www.curesearch.org</a></td>
<td>Research, collaboration, clinical trials, and resource material for families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oncology Group) have established and are running clinical trials for all common cancers in childhood. This allows a huge enrollment of patients and plenty of clinical and biological data. The following phases for clinical trial are common:

Phase I: These trials are designed to test the safety, tolerability, pharmacokinetics, and pharmacodynamics of a drug. Phase I studies cannot be offered in all centers as they require special education of the healthcare personnel and intense monitoring.

Phase II: These trials are designed for dosing requirements and drug efficacy based on the results of the phase I study.

Phase III: These studies are multicenter, often randomized, control trials to assess the effectiveness of an investigational arm/drug compared to a known “standard arm.” Most clinical trials in pediatric oncology are phase III trials. These trials have a “curative” intent for a specific disease/disease risk group.

But with all this success, we also have to acknowledge that still at least 20% of the children diagnosed with a malignancy are going to die sooner or later in treatment. The early implementation of palliative care can greatly improve symptom management, quality of life, and communication between patients and their family. As palliative care teams are unfortunately undersourced in many hospitals or only get consulted at a later stage, further improvement is necessary over the next years. As more and more patients and their parents have the desire to die at home, the amount of resources in the community has to be increased – a palliative care team covering both in- and outpatient settings would be the ultimate goal. Specialized pediatric hospices are still rare and most adult hospices are only accepting children older than 16 years of age.

References

Chapter 2
Initial Management of New Diagnosis

Katrin Scheinemann

Keywords  Compression syndrome • Electrolyte supplements • Febrile neutropenia • Flow cytometry • Hemorrhage • Hyperleukocytosis • IV hydration • Leukapheresis • Leukostasis • Lymphadenopathy • Pancytopenia • Rasburicase • Renal failure

Initial Contact

While solid tumors and brain tumors often get referred to pediatric surgery and neurosurgery, children with pancytopenia, blasts on peripheral smear, or lymphadenopathy are often referred directly to pediatric oncology.

As these referrals are made by family physicians or pediatricians who potentially have never seen such a case before, guidance is needed for the initial contact.

The following points should be considered:

1. Patient’s name and contact information.
2. Age of the patient.
3. History of current illness.
4. Recent blood work:
   Date?
   Exact values?
   Peripheral blood smear?
   Chemistry available?
5. When was the patient last seen (delay between taking blood sample and reporting from the outside laboratory)?
6. Last clinical exam?
7. Any other additional test performed? X-ray, etc.?

Upon obtaining this information, a decision has to be made as to how quickly (immediately vs. the next day(s)) and where (ER vs. outpatient clinic vs. direct admission to the inpatient ward) the patient needs to be seen. It is the responsibility of the referring physician to inform the parents about the potential diagnosis of a malignancy and provide information about the next step including the contact person of the referring hospital.

**Arrival and First Steps in the Hospital**

Upon arrival in the hospital, it is important that the patient/family will be seen as soon as possible by a pediatric oncologist. First, it will help to start a good and trustful relationship as families will have many questions which can only be answered by pediatric oncology. Second, it will help to get the necessary investigations ordered in a timely manner without delays or misses. Third, a quick clinical assessment will help facilitate the further care of the patient and decrease early morbidity.

The following blood work should be ordered:

1. CBC, including differential
2. Peripheral blood smear – to be reviewed by the lab technician and the hematopathologist and/or pediatric oncologist
3. Reticulocyte count
4. Dependent on the white cell count, flow cytometry from peripheral blood should be ordered (not possible with low counts)
5. Electrolytes (Na, K, Cl, PO$_4$, Mg, Ca)
6. Kidney function test (BUN, creatinine)
7. Bilirubin and liver function test (AST, ALT)
8. Tumor lysis blood work (uric acid, LDH) [please see Chap. 3 for further information]
9. Coagulation screen (PTT, INR) – important for further procedures
10. CMV serology – important to know patient’s status prior to the first blood product transfusions

The patient should be started on IV hydration – important to use only normal saline as IV solution. The amount of fluid will be determined by the patient’s clinical status and the blood work results. If the patient is febrile, blood cultures should be taken, and the patient should be started on broad spectrum antibiotics as per the institutional febrile neutropenia protocol. Other culture samples such as urine culture or NPS should only be considered with clinical symptoms.
The clinical exam should include at least the following points:

1. Heart – listen for murmurs due to anemia, cardiac effusion
2. Respiratory system/chest – infection, respiratory distress with positioning, pleural effusion
3. Skin – for signs of bleeding including mouth, nose, and ears
4. Abdomen – hepatosplenomegaly, other palpable masses
5. General lymphadenopathy
6. Male patients’ testes – for possible malignant infiltration
7. Hydration status
8. Any signs of sepsis without fever – peripheral perfusion and pulses, extremity temperature
9. Other sites of infection – cut, bitten, ingrown toenail, teeth
10. Other “lumps and bumps” – e.g., chloroma in AML
11. Neurological status including fundoscopy
12. Joints and bones – if there was history of joint or bone pain.

Please keep in mind that most of these patients are quite sick and are not feeling well – so please be as gentle and thorough at the same time. Explain to the patient and parents what you are looking for throughout the exam.

Additional testing besides clinical exam and blood work is needed:

1. Chest X-ray, two views – Is there mediastinal mass or infection?
   Please do not lay the patient flat if there are any concerns about respiratory distress prior to the chest X-ray [please see Chap. 4 for further information]
2. U/S testes if concern about malignant infiltration
3. U/S abdomen – hardly necessary, clinical hepatosplenomegaly does not need to be confirmed
4. CNS imaging – only necessary with clinical symptoms/concerns
5. Bone/joint X-ray – dependent on clinical symptoms

With all of these results, the immediate management and risk of the patient will be determined.

The following points should be considered until final diagnosis (bone marrow aspiration.biopsy) is made:

1. IV fluids with normal saline – at least at one-and-a-half at least fluid maintenance, but needs to be increased depending on total white cell count and hydration status
2. No electrolyte supplements should be added unless patient has clinical symptoms
3. Adequate balance monitoring including weight
4. Repeat blood work – frequency will be determined by previous results
5. Blood product transfusion – please consider the need for blood product transfusion carefully as PRBC will increase viscosity and with this morbidity. Blood products should only be transfused either for procedures or for clinical symptoms, e. g., bleeding or signs of acute cardiac failure
6. NPO orders for procedure
7. Consents for procedure and tissue samples
8. Treatment of hyperuricemia [please see Chap. 3 for further information]
Management of Hyperleukocytosis

A high initial white cell count will require immediate intervention and careful monitoring. A white cell count over $100 \times 10^9$ per L is defined as hyperleukocytosis. Hyperleukocytosis is more often observed in AML (up to 25%) compared to ALL (10%) and can be seen quite often in infants \[1\]. The early morbidity (20–40%) and mortality risk with an increased white cell count is higher in AML compared to ALL as the blasts are bigger in size and “stickier” to each other and the endothelium \[2\]. This phenomenon together with leukostasis is considered as the underlying pathomechanism.

Clinically, the following presentations are possible:

1. Neurologic (stroke, headache, blindness, altered level of consciousness)
2. Respiratory (hypoxia, dyspnea)
3. Hemorrhagic (CNS, GI, pulmonary)
4. Renal failure
5. Metabolic (tumor lysis syndrome)

Patients with symptomatic hyperleukocytosis have a higher risk of morbidity and mortality.

Treatment principles can be summarized as the following:

1. Close observation and monitoring (consider ICU admission)
2. Fluids should be increased to 1.5–2× maintenance with close monitoring of output
3. Correct coagulopathy (plt > 30–50 $\times 10^9$ per L, FFP and cryoprecipitate as needed)
4. Avoid PRBC transfusion – if necessary due to clinical symptoms, use a dose of 5 mL/kg
5. Tumor lysis precaution/treatment
6. Reduce white cell count:
   - Early start of chemotherapy
   - Leukapheresis

Leukapheresis

As leukapheresis is a resource-intensive procedure with a lot of risks, the decision to proceed has to be made early including all considerations. As all evidence is based on retrospective studies, no clear guidelines are established. Also, with the implementation of rasburicase, the value of leukapheresis is under discussion. Certainly, in patients with symptomatic hyperleukocytosis, it should be considered. The goal is to reduce the total white cell count by 50% or <100 $\times 10^9$ per L \[3\].
As the implementation requires some planning, the decision has to be made as early as possible:

1. PICU admission for close monitoring and central line
2. Pheresis nurse on call
3. Blood bank – volume needed should be calculated prior to contact, platelet transfusion

The needed blood volume needs to be calculated and ordered by the pediatric oncologist – pheresis nurse can help if no institutional guidelines are available

Blood volume calculation:
1. Reconstituted whole blood (with FFP) matches to hematocrit of the patient
2. Close monitoring of platelet count will require repeat transfusions
3. “Double blood volume processing:”
   - Infants: 100 mL/kg
   - 1–10 years: 80 mL/kg
   - >10 years: 70 mL/kg

As leukapheresis is a risky procedure, careful monitoring of the side effects is necessary. Despite the fact that the patient is in the PICU, regular visits from the pediatric oncologists through the procedure are required:

1. Electrolyte imbalance
2. Hemorrhage
3. Respiratory failure
4. Renal failure
5. Allergic reaction to blood product
6. Bleeding from central line site

Depending on the reduction of the white cell count, more than one round of leukapheresis is needed. Diagnosis should not be delayed through the procedure as with the high-white-cell/blast-count flow cytometry and molecular cytogenetics can be performed from peripheral blood. Diagnostic lumbar puncture should wait until the completion of leukapheresis, adequate platelet count, and no coagulopathy.

**Solid Tumors/Brain Tumors**

As previously mentioned, patients with a suspicion of a solid or brain tumor are often referred to the pediatric surgeon and neurosurgeon. As diagnosis in almost all cases is pathology dependent, the first step is to get a tissue sample plus/minus tumor removal as soon as possible.

Pediatric oncology is getting involved earlier or later depending on the underlying tumor type. Early involvement will have the advantage of closing the gap
between the biopsy and when the pathology results are available. Further staging investigations or basic organ function tests could be performed throughout the waiting time. Also, patients and their parents will greatly benefit from early involvement of a pediatric oncology social worker to decrease the stress and to implement any paperwork that may be needed (i.e., for financial assistance).

The risk of tumor lysis syndrome is much lower, but still an assessment is necessary. On the other hand, the risk of compression syndrome is higher and will require adequate monitoring. Depending on the patient’s clinical status and the underlying malignancy, a discharge between the initial surgical procedure and the disclosure meeting is possible.

Case 1
A 23-month-old boy was brought in with a 4–5-week history of difficulty in weight bearing, wherein the boy only crawled and refused to walk. Admitted to the hospital with right hip pain and fever, X-ray showed a lytic lesion, and he was started on antibiotics. Upon referral to orthopedic surgery, a biopsy of the lytic lesion was performed which revealed a negative gram stain but lots of small round blue cells. Subsequently, a bone marrow aspiration was done which established the diagnosis of pre-B-ALL (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2).

Case 2
A 34-month-old boy presented with lymphadenopathy, on left site of his neck. A course of antibiotics did not decrease the size; instead it was increasing. A referral to an ENT surgeon was made, who performed a biopsy. As the pathology revealed small round blue cell tumor, patient was referred to pediatric oncology. Following re-biopsy and staging investigations, patient was diagnosed with stage IV neuroblastoma (Fig. 2.3).
Fig. 2.2 MRI pelvis: Enhancing mass lesion in the proximal diaphysis of the right femor, associated with periostitis surrounding soft tissue edema and enhancement of the adjacent femoral muscles.

Fig. 2.3 CT neck: Large inhomogeneous mass left side of the neck with lymphadenopathy displacing the left jugular vein. Irregular calcifications within the mass.
References

Keywords

Allopurinol • Aluminum hydroxide • Calcium gluconate • Cardiac arrhythmias • Creatinine clearance • Cytotoxic therapy • Diuresis • Hyperhydration • Hyperkalemia • Hyperphosphatemia • Hyperuricemia • Hypocalcemia • Rasburicase • Renal insufficiency • Tumor lysis syndrome

Definition of Tumor Lysis Syndrome

Tumor lysis syndrome (TLS) is a life-threatening condition that results from the rapid destruction of malignant cells in bulky, rapidly proliferating tumors or in highly chemo- and radiotherapy-sensitive disease. Consequently, the cellular content is released into the bloodstream, and the condition becomes associated with electrolyte imbalances such as hyperkalemia, hyperphosphatemia, hyperuricemia, and hypocalcemia (Table 3.1).

Cellular damage leads to the release of nucleic acid, which is in turn catabolized to hypoxanthine, xanthine, and finally uric acid, thus resulting in hyperuricemia. Hyperphosphatemia, on the other hand, results from rapid cellular release of phosphate, where in malignant cells, intracellular phosphate levels can be up to four times higher than in normal cells. As a result of the inability of the tubular transport mechanisms to clear out excess phosphate, an increase in serum phosphate levels can lead to the precipitation of calcium–phosphate binding in the renal tubules. This causes an exacerbation of renal sequelae and can result in renal
failure. Calcium–phosphate binding can further contribute to decreased serum calcium levels, which may lead to hypocalcemia with possible clinical features of muscle cramping and cardiac arrhythmias. Another essential intracellular component that gets released into the blood stream during cell disintegration is potassium. Increased serum potassium levels may result in hyperkalemia, which is often exacerbated by the already compromised renal system and can lead to cardiac irregularities such as arrhythmias, fibrillation, ventricular tachycardia, and cardiac arrest. It can also trigger neuromuscular effects such as muscle cramping and paresthesia [1, 2].

Due to the fast progression and serious clinical implications, it is associated with high morbidity and mortality [2].

### Incidence

The incidence of TLS reported in the literature varies between 3 and 25%, depending on the diagnosis [1–4]. Laboratory TLS is present in about 20% of patients, where the clinical presentation of TLS happens in about 3–5% of patients [1–4]. In most cases, the syndrome is associated with the diagnosis of hematological malignancy such as acute lymphoblastic leukemia, Burkitt’s lymphoma, and acute myeloid leukemia. Although rare, there are reported cases of TLS in patients with solid tumors. In most cases, it is associated with large, highly proliferative tumors that are chemosensitive. TLS in patients with solid tumors tends to be unpredictable in its characteristics and timing. As a result, the mortality rate associated with TLS in patients with solid tumors is as high as 36% [1–3] (Tables 3.2 and 3.3).

| Table 3.1 Definitions of laboratory abnormalities [1–5] |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| **Element** | **Absolute value** | **Change from baseline** |
| Uric acid (Urate) | ≥450 μmol/L or 8 mg/dL | 25% Increase |
| Potassium (K) | ≥6 mmol/L or 6 mg/L | 25% Increase |
| Phosphate (P) | ≥2.1 mmol/L (or ≥ age-appropriate ULN) | 25% Increase |
| Calcium (Ca) | ≤1.75 mmol/L | 25% Decrease |
| Azotemia | ≥1.5 times upper limit of normal | 25% Increase |
Two types of TLS have been classified by Cairo and Bishop [3]: laboratory (LTLS) and clinical (CTLS).

Features of the laboratory type (LTLS):

- Two or more laboratory findings:
  - That are more than or less than the normal levels at the time of presentation
  - Or change of 25% from the baseline within 3 days before or 7 days after start of therapy

Features of the clinical type (CTLS):

- All the LTLS conditions plus two or more clinical features:
  - Renal insufficiency
  - Cardiac arrhythmias
  - Seizures (Fig. 3.1)

Preexisting renal impairment should be taken into account when establishing risk category for each individual patient. In the presence of renal compromise at the time of diagnosis, the risk group should be upstaged to the next higher level, i.e., low-risk patient with uremia or hyperuricemia at the time of diagnosis would be classified as an intermediate risk.
Clinical Manifestations

Clinical symptoms may present at the time of diagnosis but more commonly appear 12–72 h after initiation of cytotoxic therapy [1]. Clinical symptoms of TLS vary and may include, but are not limited to [1–5]:

Gastrointestinal symptoms:
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Renal symptoms:
- Reduced urinary output
- Edema
- Fluid overload

Cardiac abnormalities:
- Cardiac dysrhythmias
- Congestive heart failure

Neuromuscular symptoms:
- Lethargy
- Muscle cramping

Fig. 3.1  Signs and symptoms of LTLS vs. CTLS. [1, 3, 4]
Tumor Lysis Syndrome

Tetany
Sudden death

TLS Treatment and Supportive Care

Supportive care is a key in prevention and treatment of TLS. It consists of hyperhydration, electrolyte monitoring, and diuresis in the absence of obstructive uropathy. At the time of presentation, supportive measures listed below should be undertaken [1–5]:

- Establish IV access to maintain adequate hydration.
- Obtain baseline blood work as listed below. This is suggested but not limited to the list:
  - CBC with differential
  - Electrolytes should include sodium (Na), potassium (K), phosphate (P), calcium (Ca), and magnesium (Mg)
  - Renal function: urea (BUN) and creatinine
  - Uric acid
  - Liver function should include transaminases (AST and ALT), bilirubin (total and direct), LDH, and albumin

The frequency of blood work should be determined once baseline results are available and patient’s risk factors are established. All patients, regardless of their risk factors and the initial results, should have blood work drawn at least once every 24 h. The frequency of blood work should be increased up to every 4–6 h, if there are abnormalities at baseline or if high risk factors have been identified. Repeated blood work should include:

1. CBC with differential
2. Electrolytes: sodium, potassium, phosphate, calcium, and magnesium
3. Renal functions: BUN and creatinine
4. Serum uric acid, LDH, and albumin

Other studies could be added to the list as clinically indicated. Daily monitoring should include:

- Weight
- Fluid balance
- Cardiac monitoring

- The rate of hydration to be calculated is based on 2–3 L/m²/day with the goal to maintain urinary output between 80 and 100 mL/m²/h or between 60 and 80% of the input.
- In the absence of signs of obstructive uropathy or hypovolemia, diuretics could be used to maintain adequate urinary output. Loop diuretics are the drug of choice in those cases when diuresis is required.
Although creatinine is often used for monitoring renal function and identifying possible damage, it is a poor indicator of the acute kidney damage. Creatinine clearance or GFR would be more reliable; however, it would require a 24-h urine collection. For a quick estimation of renal function, a calculated GFR should be used based on the Schwartz formula [5]:

\[
0.55 \times \text{length (cm)} \times 88.4 / \text{serum creatinine (mg/dl)}
\]

Dialysis should be considered in patients with persistent hyperkalemia and hyperphosphatemia, symptomatic hypocalcemia, severe acidosis, fluid overload not responsive to diuretics, and in cases of symptomatic uremia such as pericarditis and encephalopathy [5].

There are two pharmacological agents that are available for prevention and treatment of hyperuricemia: allopurinol and rasburicase. Allopurinol is a xanthine oxidase inhibitor that arrests conversion of hypoxanthine and xanthine into uric acid. Although allopurinol reduces uric acid production, it may potentially lead to accumulation of xanthine that is even less soluble than uric acid in the urine. Subsequently, xanthine may precipitate in the kidneys, instigating nephropathy; therefore, renal functions should be closely monitored. Allopurinol should be administered at a dose of 10 mg/kg/day, divided every 8–24 h. The maximum dose should not exceed 800 mg/day [6, 7].

Rasburicase is an enzyme – urate oxidase – that is found in many mammalian species but not in humans. Its main function is to catabolize existing uric acid to allantoin, which is four to five times more soluble than uric acid. Studies done by Navolanic and colleagues [8] demonstrated that administration of single-dose rasburicase leads to dramatic reduction of uric acid within 4 h after administration even in patients with baseline hyperuricemia. Although rasburicase is highly effective in treating hyperuricemia, its use should be carefully considered due to high cost therefore should be reserved for high risk patients, patients with uric acid elevation at baseline and signs of renal impairment. Rasburicase should be administered at a dose of 0.05–0.2 mg/kg/dose as a single dose and repeated when clinically indicated. G6PD assay blood work should be obtained in all patients where the status is not known since rasburicase is contraindicated in patients with G6PD deficiency. In the process of uric acid destruction, there is a release of H$_2$O$_2$, an oxidant that can lead to hemolysis in patients with G6PD [6–11].

Given that the goal of TLS treatment is prevention, patients identified as low risk should be started on allopurinol with the intention of preventing accumulation of uric acid. Intermediate-risk group patients should also be started on allopurinol; however, a close monitoring schedule should be followed, and in the event of hyperuricemia, despite the administration of allopurinol, rasburicase may be considered.

Patients in the high-risk group or those upgraded to this risk group due to hyperuricemia could be treated with rasburicase as a first-line therapy (Fig. 3.2).
Treatment of Hyperkalemia

As mentioned earlier, the key in treating TLS is prevention; thus, all intravenous or oral administration of potassium should be discontinued.

Cardiac monitoring should be implemented for early identification of cardiac manifestations such as EKG changes and dysrhythmias. In asymptomatic patients with mild elevation in potassium <6 mmol/L, conservative intervention like hydration and cardiac monitoring would be sufficient as a first-line therapy. In patients with moderate elevation of 6–7 mmol/L that remain asymptomatic, sodium polystyrene sulfonate at 1 gm/kg/dose with 50% sorbitol every 6 h orally.

In patients with severe elevation of potassium > 7 mmol/L and in symptomatic patients, more aggressive treatment modalities should be implemented to counteract hyperkalemia and its effects. Calcium gluconate could be administered to antagonize the cardiac membrane effect of hyperkalemia at a dose of 50–100 mg/kg iv as a single dose. Insulin temporarily influxes potassium back into the cells, thus lowering serum concentration; it could be administered at 0.1 IU/kg with 25% dextrose solution at 2 mL/kg iv. Another temporary but very effective and readily available treatment for hyperkalemia is β-2 antagonists such as nebulized albuterol 10–20 mg that translocates potassium into the cells [2, 5, 6].

Fig. 3.2 Pharmacological treatment of hyperuricemia: [2, 4]
Treatment of Hyperphosphatemia

As with hyperkalemia, hyperhydration should continue to promote renal excretion of excess phosphate. All oral and intravenous phosphate supplementation should be discontinued and treatment implemented at serum levels of phosphate ≥2.1 mmol/L or at the levels that are ≥ age-appropriate upper limit of normal. Phosphate-binder aluminum hydroxide is the most commonly used agent for treatment of hyperphosphatemia. Aluminum hydroxide is administered at a dose of 50–100 mg/kg/day in divided doses every 6 h orally or via nasogastric tube [2, 5, 6].

Sevelamer hydrochloride is another phosphate binder that is available for use in children with hyperphosphatemia. It comes in a pill form and thus has an advantage over aluminum hydroxide, which is only available in the liquid form and poorly tolerated by many children due to its texture and flavor. Sevelamer could be administered at a dose of 400 mg twice daily and could be used anywhere from 1–7 days depending on patient response [12].

In children that present with severe hyperphosphatemia, hemodialysis remains the treatment of choice and requires consultation of a nephrologist [2, 6].

Treatment of Hypocalcemia

Hypocalcemia in TLS is usually a consequence of elevated serum phosphate levels; therefore, treatment of hyperphosphatemia would subsequently reduce calcium–phosphate binding and correct hypocalcemia. The treatment of hypocalcemia should be reserved for patients that exhibit clinical symptoms such as muscle cramping, tetany, seizures, prolonged QT, and cardiac dysrhythmias. Hypocalcemia could be treated with administration of calcium gluconate at 50–100 mg/kg iv with careful cardiac monitoring. Use of calcium gluconate should be carefully considered in the presence of elevated serum phosphate levels because of the risk of increased precipitation and potential obstructive uropathy [2, 6].

Summary

Tumor lysis is a potentially life-threatening condition that is timed with the diagnosis of malignancy and initiation of cytotoxic treatment. Clinical signs and symptoms can vary from patient to patient; hence, close monitoring should be implemented at the time of diagnosis. Risk factors for each patient should be thoroughly reviewed and risk category established prior to treatment initiation. Given that prevention of TLS is the best treatment modality, hyperhydration and surveillance are vital to managing electrolyte abnormalities. Supportive care such as cardiac monitoring, frequency of blood work, and symptoms management should be based on risk category. Additional pharmacological treatments should be instigated at the first laboratory signs of TLS in the attempt to prevent the development of clinical TLS.
Case Study 1

A 13 year-old-boy presented to the Emergency Department with 5 days history of diarrhea, weight loss, nausea, and increased abdominal distension. On examination, there was abdominal distension and tenderness over right upper quadrant, epigast-ric, and left upper quadrant areas consistent with ascites. CT showed evidence of extensive lymphadenopathy with ascites and bilateral pleural effusion. The boy was admitted for further investigation with clinical picture suggestive of possible lymphoma. A bone marrow aspiration and biopsy were performed that confirmed the diagnosis of Burkitt’s lymphoma.

Initial blood work consisted of CBC with differential and chemistry. CBC was within normal limits. Initial chemistry was also normal, with K at 4.1 mmol/L, P at 0.79 mmol/L, urea at 7.9 mmol/L, with normal creatinine at 72 µmol/L, and normal Ca at 2.24 mmol/L. LDH was abnormally elevated at 1,876 U/L. At the time of presentation, uric acid was already elevated at 1,227 µmol/L.

Examining risk factors for this patient, it is obvious that he would be considered as a high risk for TLS due to the diagnosis of Burkitt’s lymphoma and in the presence of elevated LDH.

Since the diagnosis was not immediately available, and considering an elevated uric acid level at the time of diagnosis, the patient was started on allopurinol. Blood work was ordered to be repeated every 6 h, and he was admitted to ICU in the anticipation of TLS.

The Children’s Oncology Group treatment protocol for Burkitt’s lymphoma includes rasburicase that has been integrated due to high probability of tumor lysis in children diagnosed with this disease. As such, the patient has received initial dose of rasburicase and was started on methylprednisolone as per induction course of the protocol.

Please see his blood work at starting therapy (Table 3.4).

Consequently, the patient started having wide complex tachycardia despite Kayexalate, sodium bicarbonate, calcium chloride, dextrose, and insulin administration. Cardiac output was lost for about 20–30 s, and the patient was showing pattern of ventricular tachycardia requiring defibrillation. Furthermore, his urinary output has decreased to 0.5 mL/kg/h, and his urea and creatinine were elevated over two times ULN. In view of risk of uric acid and calcium phosphate crystallization causing tubular obstruction and increasing urea and creatinine values, dialysis was initiated. Three days after the initiation of dialysis, electrolyte imbalances were controlled, and urea and creatinine returned to normal. Subsequently, the patient was transferred to the inpatient unit for continuous recovery and completion of induction chemotherapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laboratory value</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>4 h into chemotherapy treatment</th>
<th>5 h into chemotherapy treatment</th>
<th>6 h into chemotherapy treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phosphate</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>3.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.2 (ionized)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creatinine</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A 17-year-old male presented to his family physician with complaints of ankle pain, back pain, and night sweats. A complete blood count was obtained and some abnormal cells suspicious for leukemia were identified; consequently, he was admitted to the hospital to complete diagnostic workup. The diagnosis was confirmed, and he commenced therapy 5 days after initial presentation.

At the time of presentation, his blood work consisted of WBC 20 g/L, Hb 82 g/L, and platelets 82,000 g/L. His chemistry consisted of potassium 4.1 mmol/L, phosphate 1.5 mmol/L, calcium 2.44 mmol/L, creatinine 84 μmol/L, urate 434 μmol/L, and LDH 322 U/L. Based on those results and the diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, he was classified as low risk for TLS.

As mentioned earlier, prevention is the key in managing tumor lysis; therefore, he was started on hyperhydration and allopurinol. The results of his chemistry panel for 4 days after initiation of chemotherapy are shown in Table 3.5.

As evident from the table, all indices associated with TLS remained stable and within normal limits for age 4 days into initiation of therapy; allopurinol and hyperhydration were discontinued on day 7 of therapy, and he was discharged home on day 10 of induction.

## References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.5</th>
<th>Blood work result</th>
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<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Days of therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>4.0 mmol/L</td>
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<td>4.2 mmol/L</td>
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<td>4.3 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Phosphate</td>
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<td>Calcium</td>
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<td>2.18 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.15 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creatinine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>57 μmol/L</td>
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<td>61 μmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urate</td>
<td>220 μmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>304 μmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>113 μmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84 μmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDH</td>
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<td>278 U/L</td>
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<td></td>
<td>267 U/L</td>
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Mediastinal Mass and Superior Vena Cava Syndrome

Katrin Scheinemann

Keywords Airway compression • Anesthesia consult • Chest X-ray • Dysphagia • Dyspnea • Echocardiogram • Lymph node biopsy • Mediastinal mass • Right ventricular outflow obstruction • Superior vena cava syndrome

Mediastinal mass can be seen in a variety of childhood cancer: leukemias, lymphomas, neuroblastomas, and rare tumors. Some children are presenting with respiratory symptoms, but a lot of children are surprisingly asymptomatic, and the mass is only picked up on imaging.

A chest X-ray with two views should be taken early in the workup as the result will severely influence the further handling and workup of the patient.

The initial chest X-ray will help to narrow down to differential diagnosis and assess the risk management of the patient.

The mediastinum can be divided into three compartments – the anterior, the middle, and the posterior mediastinum. The anterior mediastinum comprises the thymus gland or its remnants, branches of the internal thoracic artery, and mediastinal lymph nodes. The middle mediastinum contains the pericardium and its contents. The descending aorta, the azygos and hemiazygos vein, the vagus nerve, esophagus, thoracic duct, and some lymph nodes comprise the posterior mediastinum (Fig. 4.1).

Depending on the anatomical structure, certain tumors are characteristic for each compartment.
Anterior Mediastinum

The most common tumors in the anterior mediastinum can be remembered as the 4 T’s:

- T-cell lymphoma/leukemia
- Teratoma
- Thymus
- Thyroid malignancy

Patients with masses in the anterior mediastinum are at high risk for respiratory collapse [1]. Children with respiratory symptoms and an underlying anterior mediastinal mass are at grave risk for total obstruction in the perioperative period. Anesthesia has to be aware for modified handling of these patients to avoid crash intubation or cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Spontaneous ventilation for procedures is preferred in these patients [2].

Middle Mediastinum

The most common tumors in the middle mediastinum are

- Lymphoma
- Metastatic lesion
- Malignant lymphadenopathy

Fig. 4.1 Schematic overview of the mediastinum
Posterior Mediastinum

The most common tumors in the posterior mediastinum are:
- Neurogenic tumors (neuroblastoma, pheochromocytoma)
- Lymphoma
- Ewing’s sarcoma
- Rhabdomyosarcoma

The anatomical structures of the mediastinum are explaining the expected complications if there is a mass lesion:
- Airway compression
- Superior vena cava compression
- Right ventricular outflow obstruction
- Pleural/pericardial effusion
- Tumor lysis syndrome

If the initial chest X-ray is showing a mediastinal mass, the immediate handling of the patient has to be adjusted:

Do not lay flat!
Do not sedate!

Often it is the responsibility of the pediatric oncologist to be the messenger of these handling guidelines and supervise them.

Even with the anatomical location of the mediastinal mass, which sometimes is not possible with only an X-ray, further workup investigations are needed:
1. Echocardiogram/ECG should be performed the same day
2. Pulmonary function testing depending on patient’s clinical status
3. Anesthesia consultation, if sedation is required for further workup procedures
4. CT neck/chest/abdomen/pelvis if not highly suspicious of leukemia for further staging. It will also help to visualize a possible airway or big vessel compression. It has to be well communicated to everyone that through the CT procedure the patient cannot lay flat
5. Tumor lysis blood work
6. Critical care response team (CCRT)/PICU consult if patient is unstable
7. Careful patient monitoring (cardiac monitor, oxygen saturation)

To finalize the diagnosis, a risk-adapted algorithm is needed as positioning and sedation will increase the risk for these patients. Close communication with anesthesia and surgeons or interventional radiology is needed – every procedure will require careful planning. If the procedure needs to be done awake, patients and parents have to be aware and have to be guided through it.

A stepwise approach could look like this – it will start from the least invasive procedure:
1. CBC – if no peripheral blasts or high enough white cell count – not diagnostic
2. BMA/BMBx – needs to be possibly done without sedation and different positioning – will sometimes require anterior access [please see Chap. 9 for further details]
3. Tap of pleural/pericardial effusion possible – not the best diagnostic tool
4. Lymph node biopsy if peripheral lymphadenopathy – no core biopsy, lymph node removal needed for accurate diagnosis
5. Biopsy mediastinal mass either through interventional radiology or surgery

The use of steroids to shrink the mediastinal mass should be avoided as much as possible for proper diagnosis. If patient is unstable, discussion with PICU and anesthesia has to take place about the timing of starting steroids and the procedure.

Treatment should be initiated as soon as possible to decrease morbidity.

**Superior Vena Cava Syndrome (SVCS)**

The syndrome occurs in case of a compression of the vessel either internally or externally (Fig. 4.2). Major cause for an internal compression would be a blood clot caused by an indwelling venous catheter; major cause for an external compression is lymphadenopathy. It is much more common in the adult world especially seen in lung cancer patients [3].

![Fig. 4.2 Anatomy of the superior vena cava](image-url)
Symptoms of SVCS are [4]:

1. Nonproductive cough
2. Dyspnea
3. Dysphagia
4. Hoarseness
5. Chest pain
6. Edema of the face/neck or peripheral
7. Prominent venous pattern

Imaging studies including chest X-ray or CT, ultrasound, or echocardiogram should be performed according to the planned further workup.

Similar to patients with a mediastinal mass, positioning is one of the most important treatments – do not lay the patient flat. Oxygen treatment can also be beneficial.

The role of high dose steroids for lymphadenopathy is controversial – a diagnosis has to be established prior to initiation of steroids.

Treatment for the underlying cause should be initiated as soon as possible.

**Case 1**

An 8-year-old boy presented with a 1-month history of shortness of breath, cough, and chest pain. Clinical examination revealed lymphadenopathy on the left side of the neck. Lymph node biopsy and bone marrow biopsies were done under local anesthesia; diagnosis of T-cell lymphoblastic lymphoma was confirmed (Fig. 4.3).

**Fig. 4.3** Large anterior mediastinal mass noted. Trachea is displaced
A 12-year-old boy presented with a 3-month history of progressive weight loss, shortness of breath, orthopnea, and cough. Clinical examination revealed splenomegaly, severe orthopnea (sleep at 45° angle), and decreased air entry in the right side. Diagnosis of a T-cell ALL was made (Fig. 4.4).

References

Chapter 5
Abdominal Masses

Katrin Scheinemann

Keywords Abdominal compartment syndrome • Abdominal masses • Ultrasound • Decompression • Intra-abdominal hypertension • Intra-abdominal hypertension

Many childhood malignancies are localized in the abdomen. Wilms’ tumor, neuroblastoma, and germ cell tumors can often grow to an enormous size before the children will become symptomatic. It seems that compensation is possible over a long period of time, but once the children become symptomatic, they can decompensate very quickly, and immediate intervention is necessary.

The intra-abdominal pressure is defined as steady-state pressure concealed within the abdominal cavity [1]. Normal value is around 0 mmHg. It increases with inspiration and decreases with expiration due to diaphragmatic contraction and relaxation. Intra-abdominal hypertension can then lead to an abdominal compartment syndrome which leads to end-organ dysfunction and will require immediate intervention.

Risk factors within pediatric oncology include [2]:

1. Massive fluid resuscitation for septic shock
2. Pancreatitis
3. Intra-abdominal tumors
4. Ileus
5. Mechanical ventilation
6. Postoperative complications like hemorrhage
An abdominal compartment syndrome will also affect other organ systems [3]:

1. Respiratory (elevation of diaphragm leads to increased intrathoracic pressure)
2. Cardiovascular (compression on the inferior vena cava and portal vein leads to reduced venous return)
3. Renal (direct compression of renal vessel or decreased cardiac output)
4. Gastrointestinal (decreased perfusion leads to mucosal ischemia)
5. Hepatic (decreased perfusion leads to tissue hypoxia and coagulopathy)
6. Central nervous system (elevated intracranial pressure)

The best intervention is prevention to minimize the morbidity. Early recognition and anticipation is the most important tool. The longer the hypertension is unrecognized, the higher the morbidity and mortality.

The following diagnostic tools can be helpful in the assessment of intra-abdominal hypertension:

1. Abdominal exam including abdominal girth measurement
   - Distension
   - Organomegaly
   - Mass/tumor palpable (very careful palpation – risk of tumor rupture!)
   - Bowel sounds
   - Prominent surface vein pattern
   - Swelling of lower limbs and/or scrotum
2. Abdominal US including Doppler:
   - Masses
   - Organ size and vessel flow
   - Ascites/pleural effusion
   - Bowel wall thickness
   - Lymph nodes
3. Urinary output/bowel movements (stool to be tested for occult blood)
4. Chest X-ray two views
5. Bloodwork: BGA, electrolytes, liver and renal function testing, coagulation screen
6. Echocardiogram

All of the above-mentioned tools can be done at bedside, so patient does not need to be moved.

The management includes regular monitoring and optimizing systemic perfusion and organ function, but whenever feasible, decompression should be achieved.

Medical treatment could include:

1. Body positioning (head elevation)
2. Drainage via NG tube
3. Fluid resuscitation to maintain hemodynamics
4. Diuretics and continuous renal replacement therapy
Acute decompression is sometimes necessary if the medical treatment is not sufficient enough and the patient is developing multiorgan failure. The following treatment modalities are available for acute to subacute decompression:

1. Percutaneous catheter decompression
2. Surgical abdominal decompression
3. Emergency radiation (see Chap. 16 for more details)

Even with acute decompression, continuous medical treatment and monitoring are still warranted as long-term morbidity is high. Early implementation of chemotherapy should also be considered but will not release pressure as quickly, and dosing has to be adjusted due to possible renal, liver, and cardiac impairment.

Case 1
A 4-year-old boy presented with a 10-day history of progressive abdominal pain and bed-wetting. Clinical exam revealed a distended abdomen and tenderness over the left flank with impression of a mass. Bloodwork was normal. A CT revealed a large mass arising from the left kidney. Patient was taken to the OR for tumor removal without intraoperative rupture. Pathology confirmed diagnosis of Wilms’ tumor (Fig. 5.1).
Case 2
An 11-year-old girl presented with a 1-day history of abdominal distension and pain. Clinical exam revealed only a firm abdominal mass; blood work was unremarkable. A CT showed a huge mass most likely arising from the adnexa. Patient was taken to the OR within a day, and a gross total resection, including salpingo-oophorectomy, was achieved. Pathology revealed a malignant germ cell tumor (Fig. 5.2).

Fig. 5.2 Abdominal CT
Case 3
A 3.5-year-old girl presented with a 2-week history of abdominal pain, but abdominal distension for only one day. Urgent CT scan revealed a large soft tissue mesenteric mass with encasement of renal arteries, extensive lymphadenopathy, as well as bilateral pleural effusion. Biopsy and further investigation revealed stage IV neuroblastoma. Patient experienced renal impairment and hypoalbuminemia after initiation of treatment (chemotherapy). Surgical intervention was not necessary.

First resection attempt had to be stopped due to massive bleeding, and abdominal cavity was not closed by the end of procedure (bleeding control and packing). Patient had massive abdominal compartment syndrome with ARDS, hemorrhagic shock, DIC, pleural effusion, and acute renal failure. After recovery, a second surgical attempt led to 20% debulking which was well tolerated (Fig. 5.3).

References
Chapter 6
Spinal Cord Compression and Cauda Equina Syndrome

Katrin Scheinemann

Keywords Cauda equina syndrome • Constipation • High-dose steroids • Motor weakness • Sciatica • Spinal cord compression • Urinary retention

Spinal cord compression or cauda equina syndrome is a frequent complication in pediatric malignancies. Quite often, it is one of the presenting symptoms – varying from a sudden onset to a more chronic pattern. On estimation, between 4 and 25% of all children diagnosed with cancer will develop SCC or CES [1]. Sometimes, SCC or CES occurs throughout treatment, either as new metastatic disease or as treatment complication, e.g., bleeding or myelitis following intrathecal chemotherapy [2].

As this is a neurologic emergency, urgent diagnosis and treatment is warranted. Suspicion should be raised with the following symptoms [3].

Early clinical symptoms of SCC are:

1. Urinary retention
2. Constipation
3. Urinary incontinence
4. Fecal incontinence
5. Back pain

Back pain is described as the earliest symptom lasting for quite some time prior to diagnosis [4]. Due to the age group, it can be quite unspecific in children, and they may complain of “tummy pain” instead of back pain. Pain associated with positioning (walking vs. sitting vs. lying down) or coughing and sneezing should be further investigated.
Late clinical symptoms of SCC are:

1. Motor weakness
2. Sensory impairment
3. Sensory loss
4. Paralysis

The younger the children are, the more difficult the assessment of these symptoms will be, especially if they have not been toilet trained or are not walking yet. Also, sensory impairment or loss is quite difficult to figure out as younger children will not have verbal skills to do so. Instead, the anal sphincter tone or cremasteric reflex can be tested.

Clinical symptoms of CES are:

1. Low back pain
2. Unilateral or bilateral sciatica
3. Motor weakness of lower extremities
4. Sensory disturbance in saddle area
5. Loss of visceral function

It is very important to do a thorough neurological exam and document the findings, including the estimated level and the timeline, as this will determine progression/recovery potential.

Imaging of choice is MRI of spine and pelvis. In cases of concerns for bony involvement, a CT may be needed.

In a large series from Argentina, the most common underlying tumors were localized extradural and included sarcomas (rhabdomyosarcoma and Ewing’s sarcoma) and neuroblastomas [1]. Other entities include primary CNS tumors and metastatic spread from leukemias.

If imaging is confirming an intraspinal mass with acute symptoms, neurosurgery should be contacted for a possible decompression and tumor sampling. The early start of high-dose steroids is helpful to reduce the swelling, but please keep in mind that the diagnosis (e.g., leukemic infiltrate or lymphoma) can be altered or made impossible by this. High-dose steroids seemed to improve the outcome/neurological recovery despite the side effects [5]. Tapering should be started as early as possible to minimize side effects.

If surgery is not an option, radiation oncology should be contacted (please see Chapter 16 for further information).

If neither surgical intervention nor radiation seems feasible, chemotherapy should be initiated as soon as possible. Especially in tumors like neuroblastoma, this seems to be beneficial [6].

The degree of aggressive intervention depends on the length of symptoms – paraparesis/paraplegia lasting for over 48 h has a low potential for recovery. Motor dysfunction has a better potential for recovery compared to neurologic bladder or bowel dysfunction.
Even with immediate relief of the pressure, neurological recovery will take some time and additional care needs to be taken:

1. Pain control – As medications for neuropathic pain need to be titrated, acute pain medications should be initiated first
2. Urinary retention – One time catheterization or insertion of a Foley catheter
3. Urinary incontinence – Watch out for urinary infection; antibiotic prophylaxis should be discussed
4. Constipation – Should be treated aggressively as increased risk of ileus and infection
5. Early initiation of physiotherapy and occupational therapy for paresis

Urology and pain service should be consulted early to help with the management. Also, some centers have specialist for spinal cord injury rehabilitation which can be of great help.

**Case 1**

An 8-month-old boy was referred to ER for a 1-month history of irritability and increasing weakness of his lower extremities. Clinical exam revealed significant weakness in both lower limbs with only some toe movement and areflexia. Patient underwent urgent MRI spine which revealed extradural mass from T-12 to L-3. He was taken to the OR immediately for decompressive surgery and was started on high-dose steroids. Pathology revealed to be neuroblastoma. Patient underwent complete recovery from his neurological symptoms (Fig. 6.1).

**Fig. 6.1** Sagittal MRI pre-(left) and post-operative (right)
Case 2
An 11-year-old boy with a previous history of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) 7 years ago presented with a 6-week history of progressive back pain radiating into his buttocks and thighs and leg weakness. He was unable to ambulate for 4 weeks prior to his admission. Also, at least three incidents of urine incontinence were recorded. Clinical exam revealed significant muscle weakness of his lower extremities with hyperalgesia in his buttocks.

MRI revealed a sacral mass with thickening of his cauda equina. He was immediately started on high-dose steroids and was taken to the OR for decompressive surgery. Further investigation revealed relapse of his ALL. Neurologically, he is able to walk again with a walker, no bladder or bowel dysfunction, and no sensory dysfunction (Fig. 6.2).

Case 3
A 15-year-old girl presented with a 2-year history of chronic back pain radiating into her legs. She also described numbness below her knee for almost 9 months, with no hyperesthesia sensation.

MRI revealed extensive syringohydromegaly from the medullary junction down to conus medullaris. There was also an enhancing mass with cystic areas extending from T-9 to T-12. She was taken to the OR for a 5 level laminectomy and tumor resection which was achieved a near total tumor resection. Postoperatively, her motor function recovered, but she developed a neurogenic bladder which still requires intermittent catheterization.

Pathology revealed the diagnosis of a WHO II ependymoma (Fig. 6.3).
References


Fig. 6.3 Sagittal MRI pre-(left) and post-operative (right)
Chapter 7
Fever and Neutropenia

Stephanie Cox

Keywords  Aminoglycoside • Antibiotics • Bone marrow recovery • Central venous catheters • Fever • Gram-negative • Gram-positive bacteria • Inflammatory signs • Neutropenia • Oral mucosa • Prophylactic antibiotics • Respiratory distress • Sepsis • Septic emboli • Tunnel infection • β-lactam antibiotic

Overview

Intensive cytotoxic chemotherapy regimens that often cause profound neutropenia place the child undergoing treatment for cancer at risk for life-threatening infection. Fever and neutropenia in children with malignancy carries a mortality rate of 1% and imposes significant morbidity upon patients and the families supporting those patients [1]. Fever is often the only sign of potentially life-threatening infection, and the rates of sepsis among children with cancer age 1–9 years is 12.8% and age 10–19 years is 17.4% [2]. Due to the serious nature of this consequence of therapy, this chapter focuses on the rapid recognition, assessment, evaluation, and treatment of the pediatric patient with fever and neutropenia.

Definitions

Fever – A single oral temperature of ≥ 38.3°C or a temperature of ≥38°C for ≥ 1 h continuously or at two times with a minimum interval of 12 h [2–5]. Measuring the temperature orally is the preferred route; however, if the pediatric patient is unable
to use an oral thermometer, axillary measurement is acceptable. Conservative guidelines suggest adding 0.3°C to 0.5°C the axillary temperatures [5]. An axillary temperature of 37.8°C is considered a fever. Rectal temperatures are to be avoided in the neutropenic patient due to concerns of mucosal trauma and bacteremia. Fever is often the sole sign of infection in the neutropenic host; however, infection must be considered if any signs of clinical deterioration are present regardless of temperature [4, 5].

**Neutropenia** – A neutrophil count of <500 cells/mm$^3$ or a count of <1,000 cells/mm$^3$ with a predicted decline to <500 cells/mm$^3$ within 48 h [2, 3]. The risk of infection is greatest at a neutrophil count of ≤100 cells/mm$^3$ [2, 5].

**Sepsis** – Systemic inflammatory response syndrome (temperature >38.5°C or <36.0°C, tachycardia >2 SD for age or bradycardia if <1 year, respiratory rate >2 SD for age, white blood cells above or below age norms not related to chemotherapy) in the presence of proven or suspected infection [6].

**Septic shock** – Sepsis plus cardiovascular dysfunction (hypotension, vasopressor dependence, acidosis, elevated lactate, oliguria, delayed capillary refill, core to peripheral temperature gap >3°C) [6].

**Etiology**

The epidemiology of neutropenic infections varies within treatment centers and only 10–30% of neutropenic fevers will have an identified microbiologic source [6]. Thus, the majority of febrile neutropenic episodes will be treated as a fever of indeterminate origin. It is important to note that there can be noninfectious causes of fever in this population including certain chemotherapy agents such as cytarabine and hematologic malignancy. When there is a positive microbiologic source, 85–90% are either gram-positive or gram-negative bacteria [6]. Gram-positive bacteria are responsible for up to 60–70% of microbiologically confirmed cases of fever and neutropenia [3].

Most common potential infectious etiologies in febrile neutropenic children include [3, 6]:

1. **Bacterial** – Gram positive: *Staphylococcus* spp*, Streptococcus* spp*, *Enterococcus* spp*, *Corynebacterium* spp*, *Bacillus* spp*, *Clostridium* spp
   
   Gram negative: *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Klebsiella* spp*, *Enterobacter* spp*, anaerobes
   
   "The most common causes of bacteremia

2. **Viral** – Herpes simplex, varicella zoster, respiratory syncytial virus, influenza A and B, parainfluenza, adenovirus, rotavirus, enterovirus, cytomegalovirus, epstein-barr, human herpes virus 6, BK virus, JC virus

3. **Fungal** – *Candida* spp*, Aspergillus* spp*, Zygomycetes, *Fusarium* spp*, *Scedosporium* spp*, *Cryptococcus neoformans*

4. **Other** – *Pneumocystis jiroveci*, protozoa, chemotherapy-related fever
Risk Factors

The standard of care for pediatric oncology patients with fever and neutropenia is to receive parental antibiotics in a hospital care setting. There has been an effort to assess the risk factors in this population that may make them suitable for outpatient management. Some of the identified factors include:

1. **Low Risk** – temperature $<39^\circ$C, monocyte count $\geq 1,000$ cells/mm$^3$, lack of medical comorbidity, lack of radiographic evidence of pneumonia, outpatient status at time of febrile episode, anticipated duration of neutropenia $\leq 5$ days, malignancy other than acute myelogenous leukemia

2. **High Risk** – Duration of neutropenia $\geq 10$ days, $<7$ days between last chemotherapy and onset of fever, pneumonitis, severe mucositis, signs of compensated or decompensated shock, dehydration, hypotension, respiratory distress or compromise, failure of major organ system, relapsed leukemia, treatment with high-dose cytarabine, less than 1 year of age, C-reactive protein $>90$ mg/L, platelet count $<50$, and neutrophils $<100$ cells/mm$^3$, serum polymerase chain reaction $\geq 90$ mg/L

Assessment and Evaluation

The assessment and evaluation of the pediatric patient with fever and neutropenia requires a systematic approach paying particular attention to the unique characteristics of this population.

**History** – A full pediatric history should be taken but particular detail to try to identify source of infection and the risk of sepsis should be gathered including:

- Type of malignancy
- Treatment regimen including details of the most recent therapy received
- Fever including maximum and duration and associated chills, shaking, or rigors
- Current symptoms including orthostatic symptoms, myalgias, headache, cough, rhinorrhea, shortness of breath, chest pain, ear pain, sore throat, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, pain with urination, and skin lesions
- Oral intake including nausea and vomiting and stool history
- Potential exposures including home and school contacts
- Review all current medications including colony-stimulating factors and compliance with prophylactic antibiotics
- History of previous febrile infections

**Vital Signs** – A full set of vital signs should be obtained and reassessed every 30 to 60 minutes until the patient is stable and should include:

- Temperature – maximum, duration, frequency, and responsiveness to antipyretic medication is useful in assessing risk of sepsis.
• Respiratory rate – tachypnea and increased work of breathing can be early signs of sepsis.
• Heart rate – tachycardia when out of proportion with fever, crying, pain, or anxiety should be considered compensatory shock.
• Blood pressure – hypotension should be considered a late sign of impending septic shock.
• Pulse oximetry – hypoxia may represent pneumonitis or evolving consolidation.
• Weight – useful in assessing degree of dehydration.

Physical Exam – A quick assessment of the child’s severity of illness should include the patient’s color, muscle tone, degree of activity, respiratory pattern, mental status, skin temperature, pulses, and capillary refill [6]. Classic inflammatory signs of infection including temperature, edema, erythema, and suppuration may be reduced secondary to the impaired immune system. Pay particular attention to the following sites as often the presence of discrete to moderate pain may be the only indicator of infection [2]:

• Eyes and sinuses
• Oral mucosa – including the moisture of mucous membranes and presence, characteristics, and extent of mucositis
• Lungs – assessing work of breathing and auscultated for air entry including the presence of cough, wheeze, or crackles
• Cardiovascular assessment – including color and temperature of the skin, quality of pulses, and time of capillary refill
• Abdomen – including the quality of bowel sounds, assessing for tenderness, and presence of hepatosplenomegaly
• The perineum – including genital and anal areas assessing for rash, discharge, fissures, hemorrhoids, or lesions
• Skin – including folds, sites of vascular access catheteres, bone marrow and lumbar puncture sites, and tissue around nails looking for erythema, warmth, tenderness, or fluctuance
• Site of surgery – when present, assessing the incision sites for discharge and the quality and state of healing

Diagnostic Evaluation

Diagnostic testing and evaluation should focus on determining the etiology of the infectious agent and be individualized based on the findings on the history and physical exam (Table 7.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Special Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete blood count with manual</td>
<td>For all patients to assess degree of neutropenia, anemia, and thrombocytopenia</td>
<td>Degree of myelosuppression is an important risk factor for sepsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creatinine, urea, electrolytes,</td>
<td>For all patients to assess for excessive fluid losses and plan for supportive</td>
<td>Should be reassessed every 3 days or more frequently based on therapy regimen and patient status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transaminases</td>
<td>care and monitor for drug toxicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amylase, lipase</td>
<td>For patients with signs and symptoms consistent with pancreatitis</td>
<td>Recent therapy with asparaginase is a risk factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood culture</td>
<td>For all patients who present with fever</td>
<td>Draw from each lumen of a central venous catheter and peripheral vein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bacterial growth found in CVL sample 2 h or more before other sample suggests CVL as site of infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat samples for patients with positive samples or persistent fever is indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine culture</td>
<td>In patients with urinary symptoms or neoplasms in urinary or renal areas</td>
<td>Classic indicators for urinary tract infection including urinalysis positive for white blood cells, nitrites, or blood may not be present. Culture urine regardless of urinalysis if high index of suspicion as site of infection. Assessing for virology in post hematopoietic stem cell patients with hematuria may be indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stool cultures</td>
<td>In patients with diarrhea or abdominal pain</td>
<td>Include testing for culture and sensitivity, virology, and <em>C. difficile</em> in all patients. Assessing for ova and parasites can be done on patients with risk factors or symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of lesions or wounds</td>
<td>In patients with any vesicular lesions, erythema, or exudate</td>
<td>Any rash suspected of VZV or HSV should be swabbed. Pay particular attention to central venous catheter sites, bone marrow biopsy sites, lumbar puncture sites, and surgical sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral swabs</td>
<td>In patients with evidence of mucositis, oral lesions or white plaques on</td>
<td>Swabs for both mycology and virology are indicated in patients with mucositis. Throat culture for patients suspected group A streptococcus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard palette, or buccal mucosa</td>
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</table>
### Table 7.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Special Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasopharyngeal swab</td>
<td>In patients with upper respiratory tract infection symptoms or exposure to influenza A, B, or RSV</td>
<td>Contraindicated in patients with thrombocytopenia with a platelet count &lt;20, may require transfusion prior to obtaining sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of cerebral spinal fluid</td>
<td>In patients with suspected CNS infection or meningeal signs</td>
<td>Contraindicated in patients with a platelet count &lt;50, require transfusion prior to obtaining sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest radiograph (2 views)</td>
<td>In patients with respiratory abnormalities</td>
<td>Incidence of pneumonia on CXR in febrile neutropenic patients 3–6% with almost all being associated with clinical signs and symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal Radiograph</td>
<td>In patients with focal abdominal tenderness or suspected typhlitis</td>
<td>Images need to be interpreted in the context of the profoundly neutropenic patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultrasound</td>
<td>In patients with focal abdominal tenderness, suspected typhlitis, suspected surgical abdomen, or other suspected infection in the soft tissues</td>
<td>Images need to be interpreted in the context of the profoundly neutropenic patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echocardiogram</td>
<td>In patients with positive bacterial cultures associated with cardiac vegetations or in patients with persistent fevers with associated CVL dysfunction/clots</td>
<td>Although more invasive transesophageal echo is more sensitive than transthoracic studies for detecting cardiac vegetations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT scan</td>
<td>In patients with persistent fevers and suspected fungal infections, suspected typhlitis, or abscess formation</td>
<td>Images need to be interpreted in the context of the profoundly neutropenic patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI scan</td>
<td>In patients with suspected CNS infections or bony source of infection</td>
<td>Images need to be interpreted in the context of the profoundly neutropenic patient</td>
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</table>

### Treatment

As the progression of infection in the febrile pediatric oncology patient can be rapid, the benefit of early initiation of empiric antimicrobial therapy in decreasing morbidity and mortality is well established. The cornerstone of therapy in this population is broad-spectrum empiric parenteral antibiotics that are effective against gram-positive...
and gram-negative organisms most likely to cause illness in this population. The goal of antimicrobial therapy is to be effective against a wide range of potential pathogens. An important note is that clinicians should evaluate neutropenic patients who are unwell but afebrile and nonneutropenic patients who are febrile and expected to become neutropenic. These patients should be treated as per fever and neutropenia therapy on a clinical basis [1].

**Antimicrobial Therapy**

The antibiotic regimen used should be institutional specific, taking into consideration the type, frequency of occurrence, and antibiotic susceptibility of bacterial isolates identified at the hospital.

General principles of empiric therapy include the use of:

- **Combination therapy** – β-lactam antibiotic plus an aminoglycoside. Benefits include synergistic effects against pathogens and possible reduction in emergence of antibiotic resistant organisms. Disadvantages include the toxicity, particularly nephro- and ototoxicity of the aminoglycosides.
- **Monotherapy** – broad-spectrum β-lactam antibiotic with antipseudomonal activity. Many centers now use monotherapy as standard therapy for episodes of uncomplicated fever and neutropenia as there is evidence that it is as efficacious as combination therapy [5].

Additional coverage may be warranted including the addition of:

- **Vancomycin** – for patients with hypotension or other cardiopulmonary deterioration, who have received high-dose cytarabine due to increased risk of alpha hemolytic streptococcus infections, substantial mucositis, clinical suspicion of CVC infection, or in patients with history of MRSA or recent exposure
- **Triple therapy** – including metronidazole, 3rd or 4th generation cephalosporin, and vancomycin for patients with a clinical suspicion of typhlitis, abdominal pain, or blood from the rectum who require better anaerobic activity of therapy

Indications for therapy modifications include [5]:

- Change in clinical status or vital signs, unstable patient, or worsening of symptoms and signs: change antibiotics
- Persistent fever during first 3–5 days of treatment: If no change: continue antibiotics, discontinue vancomycin if cultures negative If progressive disease: change antibiotics
- Persistent fever greater than 5 days: consider adding an antifungal drug with or without antibiotic changes
- Identification of pathogen: adjust antibiotics to most appropriate treatment
- Development of signs and symptoms of a localized infection: adjust antibiotics to most appropriate treatment
Indications for Central Venous Catheter Removal

Central venous catheters (CVC) have become essential in the administration of chemotherapy and in the supportive care of pediatric oncology patients but are a potential source of infection. The removal of the CVC may be required under the following circumstances [3]:

- Recurrent infection
- Response to antibiotic not apparent after 2–3 days
- Evidence of tunnel infection
- Evidence of periport infection
- Septic emboli
- Hypotension associated with catheter use
- Nonpatent catheter
- Bacteremia due to Bacillus sp., P. aeruginosa, Stenotrophomonas maltophilia, C. jeikeium, VRE, Acinetobacter
- Fungemia secondary to Candida sp.

Duration of Therapy

The course of antimicrobial therapy required by patients should be reassessed after 48–72 h. Decision to continue, step up, step down, or discontinue antimicrobial therapy needs to be individualized based on patient presentation, risk factors, response to therapy, and identification of pathogen. Often, the complicated febrile and neutropenic pediatric patient warrants a consult with the infectious disease service for ongoing management. Bacteremic episodes require a treatment course of a minimum of 7–14 days and individualized as per the culture and sensitivity of the identified pathogen [5].

Guidelines for the duration of antibiotics include [5]:

- All patients are to receive a minimum of 48 h of empiric therapy then
- Afebrile on day 3 and patient is:
  - Afebrile for 24–48 h
  - No identified source of fever
  - Sterile blood cultures
  - Evidence of bone marrow recovery defined as sustained increase in platelet count and absolute neutrophil or absolute phagocyte count
  → Stop antibiotic therapy
- If no evidence of bone marrow recovery and patient is for:
  → Low risk: continue antibiotics until patient is afebrile 5–7 days
  → High risk: continue antibiotics until recovery of neutrophil count and patient is well
• Persistent fever on day three and patient has:

  Absolute neutrophil count $\geq 500/\mu$L
  Continue antibiotics until 4 of 5 days after absolute neutrophil count $\geq 500/\mu$L, then reassess
  Absolute neutrophil count $< 500/\mu$L
  Continue antibiotics for 2 more weeks, reassess, and stop if no disease sites found

**Case 1**
A 13-year-old boy treated for AML developed prolonged fever and neutropenia post cycle 4 of his treatment. CT chest reveals right upper lobe airspace disease highly suggestive of invasive aspergillosis. Antifungal treatment initiated (Fig. 7.1).

![CT image](image)

**Fig. 7.1** CT image with mass like focal area of airspace disease in the apical segment of the right upper lobe surrounded by a halo of groundglass opacity
Case 2
A 13-year-old girl with underlying diagnosis of AML Multiple febrile neutropenia episodes with *Streptococcus mitis* requiring multiple central line changes. Post cycle 4, she developed severe headache and eye symptoms including blurred vision, scleral erythema and pain. MRI head revealed innumerable tiny enhancing lesions scattered throughout her brain parenchyma highly suggestive for septic emboli. Prolonged course of antibiotics and antifungal treatment until complete remission (Fig. 7.2).

**Fig. 7.1** (continued)

**Fig. 7.2** MRI image with innumerable tiny enhancing parenchymal foci diffusely throughout cerebrum and cerebellum as well as within brainstem measuring 2–3mm in maximum size
References

Conscious sedation for lumbar puncture and bone marrow aspiration and biopsy has become available in 1991, but is not used in all centers. However, no one would disagree that this has improved the quality of life for patients and caregivers quite a lot.

Lumbar puncture and intrathecal chemotherapy. Lumbar punctures can be performed either in a sitting position or lying on the site – depending on the performing physician’s experience.

It is necessary to ensure that patients/parents have consented to the procedure. The main risks are postprocedure low-pressure headache and nausea, infection, or neurological complications.

The most important point of performing a lumbar puncture is positioning. Patients should be placed in the left or right (depending on performing person’s dexterity) lateral position. They should be lying on a hard surface. Their neck and knees should be bent in full flexion – the goal is a fetal position. The area should then be prepped in an aseptic technique. Palpate the iliac crest on both sites – this is approximately the level of L 4/5. Go one level below – just in case you will get a bloody tap and have to go for another level. The needle should be inserted in a 90-degree angle from the spine. Push the needle carefully forward – you may not necessarily feel the resistance going through the dura mater. If you are uncertain, check the position of the needle. Only start collecting samples with free flow of CSF. Should CSF be bloody, you have to redo the procedure – intrathecal administration should not be performed. Depending on the center, the collected volume...
should match the injecting volume or the desired volume for analysis. After collection of the samples (normally cytospin, glucose and protein, and maybe a culture), stabilize the needle to administer the chemotherapy. Use your thumb and index finger to hold the needle on the conus – not the needle itself as you increase risk of infection. Use your other fingers to assure the distance from the spine. Inject the chemotherapy slowly. Once injection is completed either remove LP needle and syringe in total or remove the syringe first, reinsert the stylet, and then pull the needle back. Either way, be aware that you are dealing with chemotherapeutic waste. Postprocedure patients should be put in Trendelenburg for optimal distribution of the chemotherapy.

Most children recover very quickly from the procedure.

Lumbar puncture technique and intrathecal chemotherapy administration (Figs. 8.1–8.5).

Fig. 8.1 (a) Anatomical landmarks for lumbar puncture (b) Right position of the LP needle after insertion (c)
Fig. 8.2 Lumbar puncture procedure tray—at least two tubes of CSF should be collected for cytospin, glucose and total cell count

Fig. 8.3 Insertion of LP needle after verifying of landmarks, use your thumb as marker for the vertebral body
**Fig. 8.4** Collection of CSF-LP needle is stable

**Fig. 8.5** Injection of intrathecal chemotherapy-very important to stabilize the needle against the body and only to touch the conus of the LP needle
Bone marrow aspiration and biopsy.
Bone marrow aspiration and biopsies are performed quite often for diagnostic purposes and staging. Often, other services are requesting a bone marrow investigation prior to starting systemic steroids to “rule out malignancy.”
Patients/parents should have consented to this invasive procedure. Common side effects include local pain or bone pain and infection/cellulitis.
Patients are positioned in the left or right (depending on performing person’s dexterity) lateral position. The area is prepped in an aseptic technique. After location of the posterior superior iliac spine, local anesthetic can be injected depending on performer’s preference. Other possible location for a bone marrow aspiration is the anterior superior iliac spine. The aspiration needle then should be inserted in a 90-degree angle from the skin. Once the needle is no longer loose, aspiration of fluid can be performed. If not successful, the needle should be repositioned – correction should be in the distal direction. Sometimes the aspiration needle is too thin, and then an attempt with a biopsy needle should be done. The amount of samples should be calculated prior to the procedure. Sometimes a trephine biopsy is needed. Indications are “dry tap,” assessment of cellularity, and infiltration of bone marrow through metastatic tumors or protocol requirement. The technique is the same. The needle is inserted until stuck, then the stylet should be removed and the needle further advanced at least 1 cm. To loosen the biopsy cylinder, either the needle should be turned multiple times clockwise and anticlockwise or shaken. After loosening the cylinder, it is important to pull back in one movement – please alert the people holding the patient. Whether the biopsy is sufficient or not can be assessed immediately (Figs. 8.6–8.10). Please note that children recover very quickly from this procedure, and complaints about bone pain post procedure are rare.

Bone marrow aspiration and biopsy technique.
Fig. 8.6 Landmarks for bone marrow aspiration/biopsy
Fig. 8.7  Procedure tray: bone marrow aspiration needle (*bottom*), bone marrow biopsy needle (*top*)

Fig. 8.8  Insertion of aspiration needle after verifying the landmarks
Fig. 8.9  Aspiration of bone marrow (important to fixate the needle and the syringe)

Fig. 8.10  Bone marrow biopsy
Chapter 9
Blood and Blood Product Transfusions

Stephanie Cox

Keywords  ABO antibodies • Allergic reactions • Bleeding complications • CMV seronegative products • Febrile reactions • Guideline for platelet transfusion • Infusion time • Irradiation • Monitoring • Platelet transfusions • Platelets • Red blood cells • Rh immune globulin • Transfusion guidelines • Transfusion reactions

Overview

Red blood cells (RBCs) and platelets are a vital resource to support pediatric patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments. An epidemiologic study assessing blood and blood product transfusion in children found that RBCs and platelets were the two most frequently transfused products, and the rates of transfusion were highest among children with neutropenia and agranulocytosis [1]. The same study found that complications associated with blood product transfusion were rare, with a complication rate of 10.7 per 1,000 units transfused [1]. This chapter will discuss RBC and platelet transfusions in pediatric oncology patients, special product requirements, complications, and management of transfusion reactions.

Informed Consent

The administration of blood and blood products requires a discussion with the patient and caregivers to obtain informed consent. The discussion must include a description of the blood or blood product, benefits of transfusion, risks involved
with the transfusion, notably infectious risks, and possible alternatives to the transfusion. An opportunity for the patient and caregivers to ask questions must be provided. Institutional requirements for the informed consent procedure should be followed.

Red Blood Cell Transfusion (PRBC)

Red blood cells are commonly referred to as packed cells, red cells, packed red blood cells, or RBCs. RBCs consist of erythrocytes concentrated from whole-blood donations by centrifugation or collected by the apheresis method [2]. RBCs must be compatible with ABO antibodies present in the recipient serum. Each recipient and unit must be crossmatched to confirm compatibility.

Properties of each unit include [2]:

- Citrate as anticoagulants
- One or more preservatives added
- An average of 50 mL of donor plasma
- Hematocrit from 50 to 80%
- 128–240 mL of pure red cells
- 147–278 mg of iron

Indications

For children with symptomatic deficiency of oxygen carrying capacity or tissue hypoxia due to an inadequate circulating red cell mass [2]. As always, transfusion decisions must be made on an individual patient basis. Typical signs and symptoms of anemia requiring transfusion include pallor, malaise, irritability, and/or lassitude. Children receiving radiation therapy should be transfused more aggressively to maximize the effect of radiation by improving oxygenation of the tumor bed [3].

General transfusion guidelines include [4]:

- Hemoglobin 70–100 g/L – transfuse if with signs and symptoms of impaired oxygen delivery.
- Hemoglobin <70 g/L – appropriate to transfuse.
- Hemoglobin <60 g/L – transfusion highly recommended.

Dosing

- 10–15 mL/kg is generally given.
**Infusion Time**

A transfusion rate of approximately 2.5 mL/kg/h usually avoids circulatory overload. The average transfusion time will range from 2 to 4 h. Patients with cardiovascular instability may require a slower transfusion rate greater than 4 h.

**Monitoring**

The patient requires close monitoring throughout the transfusion.

Vital signs should be monitored:

- At the start of the transfusion
- 15 min into the transfusion
- Regular intervals per hospital policy
- The completion of transfusion
- As necessary, if any signs or symptoms of transfusion reaction

**Anticipated Response**

The hemoglobin concentration will usually rise by 2–3 gm/dL or the hematocrit by 6–9% if the concentration of red cells is approximately 65% [5].

**Platelet Transfusion**

Platelet transfusions are commonly referred to as platelets pooled, random donor platelets (RDP), platelets pheresis, and single-donor platelets (SDP). When possible, RDPs and SDPs should be ABO identical to the recipient, but it is not necessary when unavailable. As well, Rh-negative recipients should receive Rh-negative platelets. However, when this is not available, consider administering Rh-immune globulin.

Properties of each unit of RDPs include [2]:

- $\geq 5.5 \times 10^{10}$ platelets (average $8.0 \times 10^{10}$) per bag.
- Approximately 50 mL of plasma.
- Anticoagulant, the same as used for whole-blood collection.
- 4–10 units are pooled prior to transfusion to prepare an adult dose.

Properties of each unit of SDPs include [2]:

- $\geq 3.0 \times 10^{11}$ platelets (average 3.5–4.0 $\times 10^{11}$) per bag.
- Approximately 250 mL of plasma.
- SDPs are ready for transfusion.
**Indications**

Platelet transfusions are indicated to treat bleeding due to decreased circulating platelets or functionally abnormal platelets. As well, platelets are used prophylactically as specified thresholds to prevent bleeding complications. The 2010 guideline for platelet transfusion thresholds for pediatric oncology patients published by the C17 Standards and Guidelines Committee include [6]:

*Please check institutional guidelines first – these are only recommendations.*

- Clinically stable patients receiving chemotherapy for leukemia, post–stem cell transplantation, or patients with solid tumors → $10 \times 10^9$ per L
- Stable patients requiring lumbar puncture → $20 \times 10^9$ per L (more common $50 \times 10^9$ per L)
- Newly diagnosed patients with leukemia for diagnostic LP to minimize risk of traumatic LP → $50 \times 10^9$ per L
- Patients with leukemia/lymphoma with signs of bleeding, high fever, hyperleukocytosis, rapid fall in platelet count, acute promyelocytic leukemia, coagulation abnormality, critically ill patients, and impaired platelet function → $40 \times 10^9$ per L
- Stable patients requiring major invasive procedure → $40–50 \times 10^9$ per L
- Child has a CNS tumor with:
  - VP shunt or Ommaya reservoir → $30 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Past history of ICH → $50 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Infant receiving intensive chemotherapy → $30 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Undergoing neurosurgical procedure → $100 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Gross total resection or residual tumor and receiving chemotherapy and/or radiation → $30 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Receiving antiangiogenesis agent → $50 \times 10^9$ per L
  - Undergo LP with past history of CNS tumor → $50 \times 10^9$ per L

**Dosing**

Based on institutional blood bank guidelines, but generally includes:

- 5–10 mL/kg up to maximum 300 mL (adult dose)
- 1 unit RDP per 10 kg up to 5 units (adult dose)
- 1 unit of SDP is equivalent to 5 units RDP

**Infusion Time**

Based on institutional standards but generally includes:

- 20–60-min infusion time


**Monitoring**

The patient requires close monitoring throughout the transfusion. Vital signs should be monitored:

- At the start of the transfusion
- 15 min into the transfusion
- At the completion of transfusion
- As necessary, if any signs or symptoms of transfusion reaction

**Anticipated Response**

A transfusion of 5–10 mL/kg of RDP should produce an increase in platelet count of 50–100,000 per mm$^3$. For unit-based dosing, an expected rise of 7,000–10,000 per mm$^3$ for each unit of RDP given or 30,000–60,000 per mm$^3$ for each unit of SDP [2]. However, the response from a platelet transfusion can be adversely affected by high-grade fever, sepsis, splenomegaly, severe bleeding, consumptive coagulopathy, HLA alloimmunization, and treatment with certain drugs notably amphotericin B [2]. A post-platelet count drawn from 10 min to 3 h posttransfusion can be helpful in detecting adequate response or alloimmunization refractory patients.

**Special Product Requirements**

RBC and platelet transfusions are capable of transmitting cytomegalovirus (CMV), mediating transfusion-associated graft versus host disease (TA-GvHD) and causing febrile, nonhemolytic reactions. For pediatric oncology patients who are at risk for these complications due to repeated exposure to transfusions, many institutions will provide special blood products including gamma-irradiated and CMV-seronegative products.

**Irradiation**

Irradiation of the blood component renders T lymphocytes incapable of proliferation and is presently the only approved means to prevent TA-GvHD [2]. Patients at risk who should receive irradiated products include [4]:

- Patients with hematologic malignancies, including lymphoma and leukemia
- Patients undergoing bone marrow or stem cell transplantation
- Patients with solid tumors undergoing aggressive or myeloablative chemotherapy
CMV-seronegative products

Of the blood donors, 40–70% may be CMV positive, and leukoreduction removes most but not all CMV from blood components [2, 4]. CMV transmission can be harmful to patients who are significantly immunocompromised including allogeneic bone marrow transplant recipients. The risk of transmission can be reduced by providing CMV-seronegative products to these high-risk patients.

Noninfectious Complications

Acute <24h Transfusion Reactions (Tables 9.1 and 9.2)
Delayed >24 h Transfusion Reactions (Tables 9.3 and 9.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9.1 Immunologic [2, 4]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemolytic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Febrile nonhemolytic reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergic reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaphylactic reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfusion-related acute lung injury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9.2 Nonimmunologic [2, 4]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulatory overload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfusion-associated sepsis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Management of Transfusion Reactions

All transfusion reactions should be reported to your hospital’s transfusion service and institutional policies followed. Patients and caregivers should be instructed to notify their nurse if they experience hives or itching, feeling feverish or chills, difficulty breathing, back pain or pain at the infusion site, or any feeling different from usual.

General guidelines for suspected transfusion reactions [4]:

1. STOP the transfusion
2. Maintain IV access
3. Check vital signs
4. Recheck patient ID band and product label
5. Notify physician
6. Notify transfusion laboratory

1. Febrile reactions – are defined as a temperature increase of ≥1°C and temperature >38°C during transfusion or within 4 h of completion of transfusion.

(a) If patient symptoms include temperature ≥39°C, hypotension, tachycardia, rigors/chills, anxiety, dyspnea, back/chest pain, or nausea and vomiting:
   • Possible hemolytic reaction or bacterial contamination – discontinue transfusion, collect samples from product, and draw blood cultures.
(b) If patient does not have above symptoms:
   - Likely febrile nonhemolytic reaction – administer acetaminophen and continue transfusion cautiously.

2. Allergic reactions – are defined as presence of urticaria, facial edema, airway edema, lower respiratory tract symptoms, hypotension, or shock.

   (a) If patient symptoms include hypotension, dyspnea/cough, tachycardia, generalized flushing or anxiety, nausea and vomiting, or widespread rash ≥2/3 of body surface area:
      - Possible severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction – treat with diphenhydramine, corticosteroids, and epinephrine as required and do NOT restart transfusion.

   (b) If patient does not have above symptoms:
      - Likely minor allergic reaction – administer diphenhydramine and continue transfusion cautiously.

**Pretreatment for Recurrent Reactions**

- For patients with recurrent febrile, nonhemolytic reactions:
  - Premedicate with acetaminophen.

- For patients with recurrent urticarial reactions:
  - Premedicate with diphenhydramine and/or corticosteroids, and request plasma depletion, washed RBCs, or platelets.

**References**

Chapter 10
Thromboembolism in Children with Cancer

Uma Athale and Anthony Chan

Keywords Anticoagulation therapy • Antithrombin • Asparaginase • Cerebral sinovenous thrombosis • Pulmonary embolism • Right atrial thrombosis • Thromboembolism • Thromboprophylaxis

Introduction

Thromboembolism (TE) is an uncommon problem in children. However, children with cancer have an increased risk of developing TE. A recent study in children with cancers showed overall 8% prevalence of TE compared to 0.7–1.4 events per 100,000 children in the general pediatric population [1–3]. Thrombosis associated with cancer is a multifactorial condition resulting from interaction of cancer, its therapy, and inherent host factors. Figure 10.1 depicts the proposed interaction of various factors responsible for development of cancer-related thrombosis.

Anatomical Site of Thrombosis

The sites of TE vary to some extent according to the type of cancer. For example, cerebral sinovenous thrombosis (CSVT) is common in children with ALL, whereas a large pelvic sarcoma may induce lower limb deep venous thrombosis (DVT) [4]. Upper venous system DVTs are commonly reported in association with central venous line (CVL) [5]. Chapters 12 and 13 will discuss CVL-related thrombosis
and CSVT, respectively. In this section, we will review the available information regarding the epidemiology of TE in children with cancer, diagnosis of TE, and principles of anticoagulation management in children receiving cancer chemotherapy.

Table 10.1 outlines the proposed risk factors predisposing children with cancer to the development of TE.
Deep Venous Thrombosis

Although the presence of a CVL is identified as the most important predisposing factor for thrombosis in children, over 40% of children with cancer and symptomatic TE have thrombosis at sites distant from their CVL [6, 7]. About 10% of patients will have involvement of multiple sites at the time of the diagnosis of TE.

Right Atrial Thrombosis

Right atrial thrombosis (RAT), although uncommon, is a potentially lethal site of thrombosis. In majority of patients, RAT is related to the indwelling CVL. Presence of catheter tip in the right atrium is identified to be a major risk factor for the development of RAT [4, 8].

Overall, 2% of patients with ALL and symptomatic TE were reported to have developed RAT [6, 9]. However, studies evaluating patients for asymptomatic TE report higher (14%) prevalence of RAT [5, 6]. Korones et al. reported 8.8% prevalence of RAT in children with cancer and indwelling catheters; children with ALL were at significantly higher risk for developing RAT [10]. In a review of literature describing 122 children with RAT, 19% had cancer [11]. About 44% of patients with RAT were symptomatic; respiratory distress was the commonest symptom. Other clinical presentations include rhythm disturbances (bradycardia or tachyarrhythmia), new murmur, cyanosis, hemoptysis, heart failure, or cardiac arrest (Table 10.2) [11]. For asymptomatic patients, the thrombus is usually detected on routine testing, like an echocardiogram (ECHO).

About one third of children with RAT tend to be at high risk for development of pulmonary embolism (PE) and tend to have high-risk features which include large (>2 cm in diameter) clots, pedunculated or snake-shaped clots, and mobile clots [11]. Complications of RAT include pulmonary embolism (PE) and death.

Management of RAT is usually a multidisciplinary approach involving hematologists, cardiologists, cardiothoracic surgeons, and/or interventional radiologists. Severity of associated symptoms and cardiac morbidity usually dictate the management of RAT [4, 8]. The various treatment modalities include surgical thrombectomy, thrombolysis with or without systemic anticoagulation, or systemic anticoagulation alone. Surgical thrombectomy or thrombolysis with or without systemic anticoagulation is usually indicated for high-risk clots, whereas systemic anticoagulation, CVL removal, or observation alone are modalities suitable for low-risk clots. For either therapeutic choices, close monitoring with frequent ECHO is essential. More aggressive surgical approach may result in delay in chemotherapy, and thrombolysis may lead to pulmonary embolism.
**Pulmonary Embolism**

In general, pulmonary embolism is rare in children. Two recent childhood thrombosis registries reported annual incidence of PE ranging from 0.14 to 0.9 cases per 100,000 children [2, 3]. A recent study from the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, reported a much higher prevalence of PE of 4.6/100,000 children [11]. In this study, cancer (occurring with a frequency of ~18%) was the second most important underlying disease in children with PE. The reported frequency of PE in children with cancer varies from 0.5% to 2.9% [1, 11, 12]. However, in a cohort of 55 children with cancer and symptomatic thrombosis, PE was present in 5% of patients [1].

**Risk Factors Predisposing to the Development of PE**

This information is mainly based on studies in general pediatric population [11, 13]. Idiopathic PE is rare in childhood. Almost all patients have an underlying risk factor:

1. Presence of CVL: One study identified PE in 16% of patients with CVL. Despite higher prevalence of CVL-associated upper extremity thrombosis in children with ALL, PE is reported only in ~2% of children with ALL and symptomatic TE [4, 6]
2. Concurrent DVT: About 70% of children with PE are reported to have clots elsewhere in the body
3. Cardiac disease: The most common underlying condition in children with PE
4. Recent surgery
5. Immobilization
6. Prothrombotic defects: Identified in ~30% of children with PE

**Complications and Outcome of PE**

PE is a serious condition with ~9% fatality rate. Systemic anticoagulation is effective in complete or partial resolution of PE in ~80% of children. However, bleeding is a common complication reported in ~20% of children. Recurrence of PE is also common especially with recurrence of predisposing risk factors. Pulmonary hypertension is a significant problem in survivors of PE.

**Evaluation of a Child with Suspected Thromboembolism**

Clinical presentation depends on the age of the patients, site of thrombosis, extent of occlusion, and acuteness of occlusion. Although the clinical symptoms of thrombosis in children with cancer are usually similar to those seen in patients without
malignancy, the clinical presentation of thrombosis may be complicated by other cancer-associated comorbidities and may delay the diagnosis of TE. For example, headache secondary to CSVT in a child receiving antileukemic therapy may be attributed to intrathecal chemotherapy or hypertension secondary to steroid therapy. This may delay the diagnosis of CSVT. Hence, a high index of suspicion is essential.

Diagnosis of TE should be objectively confirmed by at least one (or more) diagnostic method. In the presence of TE at one site, it is recommended that other sites be evaluated (especially if anatomically related, e.g., jugular vessels in the presence of cerebral sinovenous thrombosis) for associated asymptomatic TE at other site. Table 10.2 outlines common symptoms associated with various types of TE and recommended investigations to confirm thrombosis.

Management of Thrombosis in Children with Cancer

So far, there are no evidence-based guidelines for prevention and management of TE in children with cancer. Most of the recommendations are based on studies conducted either in the general pediatric population or in adults with cancer [4, 14]. We refer the reader to a more extensive review on this subject [15].

Anticoagulation Therapy in Children with Cancer

Thrombocytopenia and coagulopathy which are commonly present in children receiving chemotherapy can increase the risk of bleeding associated with anticoagulation therapy. Further, invasive procedures (e.g., lumbar puncture with/without chemotherapy, bone marrow aspiration and biopsy, tissue biopsy, second-look surgery, or neurosurgery) are an inherent part of cancer therapy. Conservative antithrombotic management has the danger of progression of thrombosis or residual thrombosis, whereas aggressive therapy may lead to bleeding. These factors pose special challenges in the management of a child with cancer requiring anticoagulation therapy.

Here, we will discuss the challenges posed by the use of anticoagulation therapy in children receiving chemotherapy and the special considerations required for treating children with cancer.

Choice of Anticoagulant Agent

The details of antithrombotic agents are beyond the scope of this chapter. We refer the reader to more extensive reference on this topic [15]. Table 10.3 refers to the advantages and disadvantages of different anticoagulation agents with special reference
**Table 10.2** Evaluation and diagnosis for patients with suspected thrombosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Likely clinical signs and symptoms</th>
<th>Diagnostic method/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNS</td>
<td>Arterial ischemic stroke ± hemorrhage</td>
<td>MRI/MRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unexplained headaches, vomiting, visual problems or neurological deficits, seizure, drowsiness or any</td>
<td>Angiogram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>change in mental status, signs of raised intracranial pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinovenous thrombosis (SVT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>MRI/MRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CT venogram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Pulmonary vasculature</td>
<td>V/Q scan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respiratory problems (shortness of breath, tachypnea, dyspnea), bradycardia, tachyarrhythmia, cardiac failure, hypoxia, chest pain, syncope, “unexplained pneumonia”</td>
<td>Spiral CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pulmonary angiogram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVT</td>
<td>Upper venous system</td>
<td>Bilateral venogram is a “gold standard” for diagnosis of subclavian/brachial vessels TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swelling, pain, tenderness, erythema, dilated vessels</td>
<td>Doppler USG necessary for jugular vein TE$^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommend ECHO to evaluate RAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doppler USG to evaluate all sites$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venogram is still the gold standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiac</td>
<td>Right atrial</td>
<td>ECHO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVL related DVT</td>
<td>CVL occlusion, sepsis, congestive heart failure</td>
<td>ECHO, linogram, venogram and/or Doppler USG depending upon the site of thrombosis$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swelling, pain, tenderness, erythema, dilated vessels, CVL occlusion requiring revision or renewal,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>headache, swelling of face</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red flags: recurrent CVL-related infections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A significant CVL-related DVT of the vessel harboring CVL may be asymptomatic. Hence, high index of suspicion is required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Detection of echogenic material within the lumen of a vein on a gray scale and presence of partial or complete absence of flow by pulse wave or color Doppler ultrasonography

*TE* thromboembolism; *CNS* central nervous system; *MRI* magnetic resonance imaging; *MRV* magnetic resonance venogram; *MRA* magnetic resonance arteriogram; *PE* pulmonary embolism; *V/Q scan* ventilation/perfusion scan; *CT* computerized tomography; *DVT* deep venous thrombosis; *USG* ultrasonogram; *CVL* central venous line; *RAT* right atrial thrombosis; *ECHO* echocardiography

Adapted from Wiernikowski J, Athale UH. Thromboembolic complications in children with cancer. Thrombosis research 2006;118:137-152
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticoagulant</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages/complications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfractionated heparin (UFH)</td>
<td>aPTT Difficult</td>
<td>Easy reversal</td>
<td>Bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Osteoporosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-molecular-weight heparin (LMWH)</td>
<td>Anti-Xa levels Easy monitoring Efficacy comparable to UFH and safe Cost effective</td>
<td>Subcutaneous administration Bleeding complication (0–5.6%)</td>
<td>Target anti-Xa levels in children are unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to reverse anticoagulation in emergency situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral anticoagulants</td>
<td>INR Difficult</td>
<td>Oral administration Low cost</td>
<td>Dose requirements strongly influenced by age Efficacy affected by diet&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; No stability data on solution or suspension, making dosing in young children and in children unable to swallow tablets difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Babies may have resistance to warfarin if formula fed (vitamin K enriched), whereas breastfed infants may be oversensitive due to poor vitamin K content in breast milk.

UFH unfractionated heparin; aPTT activated partial thromboplastin time; ALL acute lymphoblastic leukemia; NHL non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma; LMWH low-molecular-weight heparin; INR international normalization ratio; TPN total parenteral nutrition; PCP Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia

Adapted from Athale UH, Chan AKC. Thromboembolic complications in pediatric hematologic malignancies. Semin Thromb Hemost 2007, 33:416-26
to children with cancer [4, 14, 15]. Low-molecular-weight heparin (LMWH) is safe, as effective as unfractionated heparin (UFH), has minimal drug interactions, and is easy to manage around elective invasive procedures. Hence, LMWH is the preferred anticoagulant in children with cancer. The dosing is adjusted to achieve an anti-Xa activity between 0.5 and 1.0 U/dL.

Management of Anticoagulation Therapy Around Invasive Procedures

Due to the risk of bleeding and spinal hematomas, it is recommended to withhold at least two doses of LMWH and to determine anti-Xa levels prior to surgical procedure, if possible, prior to lumbar puncture or epidural procedures [15]. In some facilities, LMWH is held for 24 h prior to LP or surgical procedures. However, it may not be routine to check anti-Xa level prior to the procedure. LMWH is resumed soon after the procedure if the procedure is uncomplicated. Following a more invasive procedure (like surgery), anticoagulation can be started after consultation with surgical colleagues and only when the risk of bleeding is deemed to be minimal or nonexistent.

Management of Anticoagulation Therapy in the Presence of Thrombocytopenia

There are no evidence-based guidelines for dose adjustment of anticoagulation therapy in relation to platelet counts.

In absence of any other coagulopathy, we use following guidelines:

- Full-dose LMWH therapy for patients with platelet count >30×10⁹ per L.
- 50% of dose at a platelet count between 20 and 30×10⁹ per L.
- Withhold LMWH for platelet count <20×10⁹ per L.

In early stages of thrombosis or thrombosis in organ or life-threatening sites (e.g., CSVT, PE), it is important to maximize the anticoagulation therapy. In these circumstances, platelet transfusions are given prior to anticoagulation to maximize the anticoagulation in patients with thrombocytopenia. If at all possible, it is preferred to have uninterrupted anticoagulation during the first month of antithrombotic therapy.

A close monitoring of platelet count and careful watching for signs of bleeding are necessary. Depending on anticipated drop in platelet count, we check platelet counts either daily or twice/three times a week.

Please note: These practice guidelines are based on personal experience.
Management of Asparaginase Therapy in a Child with TE

In conditions treated with asparaginase (e.g., acute lymphoblastic leukemia, lymphoma), the development of thrombosis is closely associated with asparaginase therapy. Asparaginase is shown to reduce synthesis of natural anticoagulants especially antithrombin (AT) resulting in an acquired prothrombotic state. Other drugs like steroids also induce a prothrombotic state and increase the risk of thrombosis in patients receiving combination chemotherapy. Since asparaginase seems to be the main culprit, development of TE warrants temporary withholding of asparaginase therapy. However, asparaginase is an important component of antileukemic therapy, and interruption of asparaginase therapy is shown to affect outcome from ALL [16]. Hence, it is important to make every effort to resume asparaginase once anticoagulation therapy is established. The currently safe and effective anticoagulation therapy makes it possible to continue asparaginase therapy with concomitant anticoagulation, and there is no need for permanent discontinuation of asparaginase.

In a child diagnosed with symptomatic or clinically significant thrombosis, we recommend initiating anticoagulation therapy, if no bleeding risk, and withholding further asparaginase therapy until the clinical condition stabilizes and hematological parameters normalize. Once TE is under control and the anti-Xa levels are in the desirable range, we reinstate asparaginase along with continuation of anticoagulant therapy. We continue anticoagulation therapy for at least 3 months or until 3–4 weeks after completion of asparaginase therapy, whichever is longer.

Role of Antithrombin Replacement in Patients on Asparaginase Therapy

Acquired antithrombin (AT) deficiency is thought to be the main pathogenic mechanism for asparaginase-induced prothrombotic state. Hence, it is intuitive to consider AT replacement along with asparaginase therapy. However, the clinical benefit of routine AT supplementation in prevention of TE is yet to be proven, and so far, there are no data to support routine use of FFP or AT supplementation in children receiving asparaginase [4, 5, 14]. Despite lack of evidence, several institutions continue to supplement FFP and/or AT for prevention of thrombosis while receiving asparaginase. This practice may lead to unnecessary exposure to blood products.

Reduction in AT levels may influence the efficacy of heparin based anticoagulation therapy. For patients on LMWH-based anticoagulation, AT replacement is not necessary as long as targeted anti-Xa level is achieved.

Primary Thromboprophylaxis for CVL-related TE

Results of several randomized controlled trials (RCTs) do not recommend primary thromboprophylaxis for adults with malignancy for prevention of CVL-related TE [17]. Similarly, studies in children do not support the use of primary thromboprophylaxis of CVL-related TE [4, 14, 15].
Secondary Thromboprophylaxis Following Development of TE

A retrospective study and a recent population-based study showed that children with cancer are at increased risk of recurrence of TE [1, 18]. Hence, we offer secondary prophylaxis in children with cancer especially if there is reexposure to the identified risk factor (e.g., asparaginase therapy or relapse/recurrence of cancer).

References

Introduction

Compared to general pediatric population, children with cancer are at increased risk of cerebral sinovenous thrombosis (CSVT). CSVT is associated with high morbidity and mortality. Hence, early detection and prompt therapy is essential.

A recent study has shown an increased risk of thromboembolic events including cerebral sinus venous thrombosis in children with cancer [1]. This probably is related to aggressive and more invasive therapies, increased awareness, and improved imaging techniques. In 2001, Canadian Pediatric Stroke Registry noted an incidence of CSVT to be 0.7 cases per 100,000 children per year [2]. Raiser et al. recently reported CSVT in 0.3% of patients seen in neurologic consultation [3]. Wermes et al. reported ~6% incidence of CSVT in children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) treated on Berlin–Frankfurt–Munster (BFM) ALL 90/95 protocol [4]. The predisposition to the development of CSVT varies with the type of cancer and the chemotherapy protocol used as well as underlying factors.
CSVT in Children with Cancer

Cerebrovascular accidents including thromboembolism are one of the common causes of acute neurologic deterioration in children with cancer [5]. About half of the children with ALL and symptomatic thrombosis have central nervous system (CNS) thrombosis, and over half of these CNS thromboses occur in the cerebral sinovenous area [6–8]. This may be related to the use of asparaginase in most ALL therapy protocols.

However, CSVT has also been reported in children with cancers other than ALL. CSVT has been reported in patients with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL) with or without asparaginase therapy [9, 10]. It is estimated that ~1–3% of patients with NHL may develop CSVT. Other childhood tumors such as neuroblastoma have also been reported in association with CSVT [9].

Anatomy of Cerebral Sinovenous System and Pathogenesis of CSVT

Figure 11.1 depicts the anatomy of the cerebral sinovenous system. In CSVT, thrombosis occurs both in veins of brain and venous sinuses. The thrombosis of the brain veins lead to venous infarction leading to insufficient blood supply and venous congestion. This in turn results in cerebral edema (both vasogenic and cytotoxic). Vasogenic edema results mostly from venous congestion and cytotoxic edema probably due to ischemia as a result of reduced blood flow. The venous congestion may lead to small petechial hemorrhages which may merge into large hematomas.

The thrombosis of venous sinuses leads to reduced absorption of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and an increase in intracranial pressure (ICP). Figure 11.2 outlines the CSF flow and absorption into the venous system via arachnoid granulation. Thus, CSVT leads to CSF blockage and raised ICP, usually without ventricular dilatation. Based on the severity and acuity of obstruction, the raised ICP could be asymptomatic or even fatal.

CSVT may occur in superficial or deep venous system, the superficial system being most commonly involved compared to the deep venous system (outline in Table 11.1) [11]. The superficial system, especially the sagittal sinuses, has many sites of more turbulent blood flow. In addition, due to drainage of diploic, meningeal, and emissary veins, it is more susceptible to infection-related clotting. The deep venous system has more extensive collateral circulation. Further, involvement of deep venous system is relatively difficult to recognize radiologically. The location of CSVT is age dependent (with older children having more lateral sinus involvement compared to neonates) and related to the etiology of thrombosis.
Etiology of CSVT in Children with Cancer

In pediatric age group, CSVT is usually a secondary phenomenon to an acute or chronic condition. Even in patients with chronic illness, acute risk factors are frequently observed. The common risk factors are outlined in Table 11.2.

The exact etiology of CSVT in children with cancer is not known but may be related to direct tumor invasion, therapy-induced (e.g., asparaginase) hypercoagulable state, or associated complications such as dehydration, infection, or a combination of the above factors [4, 5]. The risk of CSVT is shown to be increased by the presence of an underlying prothrombotic disorder [12, 13].
Clinical Presentation

The clinical presentation depends on the age of the patients, associated risk factors, acuity of thrombosis, raised ICP, and location of thrombosis within the cerebral sinus system. The median duration is reported to be ~5 days with a range of 12 h–120 days [11]. Hence, a high index of suspicion is required.

Table 11.1  Location of cerebral sinovenous thrombosis [2, 11]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superficial</td>
<td>76–86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagittal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral (sigmoid/transverse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep</td>
<td>14–38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal cerebral veins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vein of Galen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.2  Risk factors predisposing older children to the development of CSVT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acute systemic illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehydration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head and neck disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prothrombotic states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prothrombotic medications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.3  Neurologic signs and symptoms in children with CSVT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neurologic signs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seizures</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focal</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffuse neurological signs</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased level of consciousness</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papilledema</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focal neurologic signs</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemiparesis</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual impairment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranial nerve palsies</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ataxia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech impairment</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory loss</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infants and young children present with seizure (either focal or generalized) and lethargy, whereas older children present usually with signs of raised ICP (headache, vomiting, altered consciousness), seizure, or focal neurological signs (hemiparesis, cranial nerve palsy). Older patients may also present with signs of cavernous sinus syndrome. Signs and symptoms of associated underlying risk factors (e.g., dehydration, fever) may also be present. Although majority of patients with CSVT are symptomatic, in some patients, the CSVT could be asymptomatic and an incidental finding. Table 11.3 enlists the common clinical manifestation of CSVT.

**Diagnosis of CSVT in Children**

Please refer to Table 11.4 for advantages and disadvantages of various imaging modalities available for diagnosis of CSVT.

**Principles of Management of CSVT**

Current recommendations are derived from experience in adults. The mainstay of therapy is supportive care and anticoagulation therapy.
**Table 11.4** Summary of available radiological imaging techniques for diagnosis of cerebral sinovenous thrombosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic modality</th>
<th>Radiological features</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head CT with contrast</td>
<td>Dense cord sign (1–5%)&lt;br&gt;Empty delta sign (classic stigmata of CSVT) (10–30%)</td>
<td>Most commonly used&lt;br&gt;Easy availability</td>
<td>Radiation exposure&lt;br&gt;Limited sensitivity (68%) and specificity (52%) for diagnosis of adult CSVT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT venogram</td>
<td>Delineates the venous system</td>
<td>Emerging as diagnostic tool for adults</td>
<td>High radiation exposure&lt;br&gt;Rapid contrast injection rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI</td>
<td>Delineates arterial, venous system as well as details brain structure</td>
<td>Noninvasive&lt;br&gt;No radiation exposure&lt;br&gt;Allows 3D visualization&lt;br&gt;Better characterization of brain</td>
<td>Costly&lt;br&gt;Requires sedation in younger children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI with MRV</td>
<td>Accurate visualization of cerebral sinuses and veins&lt;br&gt;Improved sensitivity with addition of contrast study</td>
<td>Characterizes edema, infarction&lt;br&gt;Unsuitable for very young infants</td>
<td>MRV may lead to false positive diagnosis of CSVT if the blood flow is slow&lt;br&gt;Small children need sedation&lt;br&gt;Require neuroradiologist for interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venous TCD</td>
<td>Emerging noninvasive diagnostic tool</td>
<td>Best suited for neonates</td>
<td>Not suitable for older children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional angiogram</td>
<td>Characterization of vasculature</td>
<td>Gold standard for diagnosis of CSVT</td>
<td>Invasive&lt;br&gt;Radiation exposure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CSVT cerebral sinovenous thrombosis, CT computerized tomography, MRI magnetic resonance imaging, MRV magnetic resonance venography, TCD transcranial Doppler study

---

**Principles of Supportive Care**

1. Treat underlying cause (e.g., infection, dehydration)
2. Management of raised ICP

**Anticoagulation**

Systemic anticoagulation therapy is reasonably safe and mostly effective. Proposed benefits include limitation of propagation of clot as well as prevention of formation of new thrombi.

Immediate anticoagulation is usually achieved through unfractionated heparin (UFH) or low-molecular-weight heparin (LMWH). Please refer to Chap. 10 for details of management of anticoagulation therapy.


**Duration of Anticoagulation**

The duration of anticoagulation therapy is usually 3–6 months. For more details, refer to Chap. 10.

**Thrombolytic Therapy**

Although there is no evidence regarding safety or efficacy of this modality, thrombolytic therapy has been increasingly used for management of CSVT. There is no data on pediatric patients except a few case reports. From adult studies, the thrombolytic therapy is limited to the following patients:

1. Patients who are comatose
2. Patients who have progressive neurological deterioration despite systemic anticoagulation
3. Absence of intracerebral hemorrhage prior to the start of therapy.

In pediatric oncology, we rarely need to resort to such invasive therapy.

**Outcome of Patients with CSVT**

This information is based on observational studies conducted in neonates and general pediatric population.

1. High mortality (8–16%)
2. Long-term neurological morbidity (22–38%) including motor deficit, neuropsychiatric dysfunction, visual impairment, pseudotumor cerebri, seizure, and headache
3. Recurrent CSVT in ~2–8% of children

**References**

Chapter 12
Central Venous Line-related Thrombosis

Uma Athale and Anthony Chan

Keywords  Accidental dislodgments • Ball-valve clots • Central venous lines • Compressibility • CVL dysfunction • CVL occlusion • CVL-related thrombosis • Mural thrombosis • Pinch-off syndrome • Port-A-Cath • Postthrombotic syndrome • Prothrombotic effects • Sleeve thrombus • Thrombolytic agents • Venogram

Long-term central venous lines (CVL) have improved the quality of care and quality of life of children with cancer. The CVLs are commonly used to deliver chemotherapy, blood products, parenteral nutrition, and other intravenous therapy as well as to facilitate repeated blood drawing essential for the monitoring of these patients [1]. Hence, the use of CVL has become standard of care for venous access in children with malignancy.

Types of CVL: Two types of CVLs commonly used in children with cancer:

1. Internal CVL: subcutaneous venous access port or totally implantable venous access device (e.g., Port-A-Cath or Mediport).
2. External CVL: could be tunneled (e.g., Hickman, Broviac, or Groshong) catheters or peripherally inserted central catheters (PICC). The external CVLs can be with or without valves.

Each of these lines could be single- or multi-lumen; choice of the CVL depends on the age and the need of the patient.
Complications of CVL

CVLs are associated with early complications, mostly surgical, related to the line insertion (e.g., bleeding and pneumothorax) and late complications, mostly medical (e.g., infection and thrombosis) [1–4]. Two recent studies have identified a CVL-related complication rate of 40–46% [1, 5]. Infection and thromboembolism (TE) are the most common and serious medical complications associated with CVL. Yet another common, but less studied, complication is CVL occlusion (also known as CVL dysfunction, blockage, or malfunction) [5–7]. In this chapter, we will discuss the two common complications of CVL, namely CVL occlusion and CVL-related thromboembolism.

CVL Occlusion

Occlusion is usually defined as inability to infuse fluids or withdraw blood [2, 5, 7]. The occlusion could be partial when there is difficulty either in aspiration or infusion, or complete when there is difficulty in both aspiration and infusion. The occlusion can be acute or gradual.

The occlusion may result from mechanical and/or nonmechanical causes. Mechanical causes include kinking, dislodgment, fracture, and leakage, whereas nonmechanical causes include thrombosis, intraluminal precipitation due to medication or total parenteral nutrition (TPN) [2, 3]. About one third of patients would have CVL occlusion within 1–2 years of catheter placement, and about one third of occluded CVLs need to be removed [2, 3, 8, 9]. Further, occluded CVLs result in interruption or delay of the chemotherapy which may affect outcome. Hence, an early and accurate diagnosis of etiology of CVL occlusion is important for effective management and prevention of complications. Table 12.1 outlines the common causes of CVL occlusion.

Nonthrombotic Causes of CVL Dysfunction/Occlusion

The causes of mechanical problems are variable depending upon the type of CVL, vein of access, and method of CVL insertion (cutdown vs venipuncture) as well as CVL tip positioning. The common mechanical problems associated with external lines are accidental dislodgments (reported to be as high as 24%) and damage to the external part of the CVL. One study observed that over 40% of CVL dysfunctions were nonthrombotic [10].

Table 12.1 lists the various mechanical problems and the diagnosis and management of the same. A common problem is that the CVL tip is too close to the vessel wall or it is blocked by the endothelium leading to “positional” functioning of the CVL.
Repositioning maneuvers like raising the ipsilateral arm, sitting up, standing, rolling over, or bending forward or coughing may improve “positional” functioning. A rare but potentially fatal problem is the “pinch-off syndrome” as shown in Fig. 12.1. The “pinch-off syndrome” occurs in ~ 1% of CVLs but may result in ~ 40% of catheter fractures with subsequent embolization through heart to pulmonary vasculature [3, 11].

Inappropriate composition of TPN or drugs or incompatible solutions may result in precipitation within the CVL lumen and “chemical” blockage. For example, inappropriate concentrations of calcium and phosphorus may lead to precipitation of
calcium phosphate crystals especially if the pH of the solution is high, or drugs with high pH (e.g., phenytoin) may precipitate in acidic solutions. These kinds of occlusions could be treated with appropriate flush solutions, e.g., alkaline solutions like sodium bicarbonate (1.0 mol/L) or sodium hydroxide (0.1 mol/L) for acidic precipitates or acidic solutions like hydrochloric acid (0.1 mol/L) for basic precipitates. Blockage resulting from lipid emulsions of TPN may be dissolved with 70% ethanol [3, 8, 9]. However, these solutions (especially hydrochloric acid) can cause damage to the catheter wall and may lead to other side effects (e.g., dizziness with alcohol) and hence are not widely used [3].

**Thrombotic CVL Occlusion**

Thrombotic occlusion is the most common cause of CVL dysfunction [4–6, 8]. This can result from:

1. Sleeve thrombus: This is a fibrin sheath surrounding the catheter and is the most common type of thrombotic occlusion. The fibrin sheath may develop soon after CVL placement but usually within 2 weeks. The fibrin sheath usually does not affect CVL function but may result in partial obstruction which is pressure dependent.
2. Clots at the catheter tip (ball-valve clots): These are the clots developing on the external surface of the CVL and may block the tip of the line.
3. Intraluminal clots: These are clots developing within the lumen of the CVL and account for ~ 5–25% of all CVL occlusions.
4. Mural thrombosis: This is the formation of nonocclusive thrombus in the catheterized vessel that adheres to the vessel wall and can occlude the tip of the catheter.

5. Occlusive deep venous thrombosis (DVT) of the catheterized vessel with or without involvement of central vasculature.

The sleeve thrombus or the ball-valve clots may result in partial obstruction by creating one-way flow and usually result in withdrawal obstruction. While aspirating for blood, the negative pressure creates a ball-valve effect by pulling the fibrin sheath or CVL tip clot which occludes the flow in the lumen. This blockage resolves when the pressure of infusion or flushing pushes the fibrin sheath or a small clot away from the tip.

**Evaluation and Management of Patients with Thrombotic CVL Occlusion**

Table 12.1 outlines the diagnosis and management of various causes of CVL occlusion. Figure 12.2 describes the algorithm of evaluation and management of CVL occlusion.

Various thrombolytic agents are usually used empirically to treat suspected thrombotic occlusion. Table 12.2 describes commonly used thrombolytic agents. The recommended approach includes delivery of a thrombolytic agent into the CVL lumen with a dwell time of at least 30 min. Repeat the dose if necessary. However, if after the second dose the patency is not restored, then further studies are warranted to rule out occlusive DVT.

**CVL-Related Thrombosis**

Presence of CVL is the single-most important risk factor for development of thrombosis in children [4]. This risk is further exaggerated in children with cancer due to the prothrombotic effects of cancer and the chemotherapy. Majority of CVL-related thromboses occur in upper extremities since most long-term CVLs are placed in the upper venous system. These CVL-related thrombosis could be symptomatic (with pain, tenderness to palpation, edema, skin discoloration, warmth, and dilated veins) or asymptomatic [12]. About 12% of children with CVL are reported to have symptomatic CVL-related thrombosis whereas up to 50% have asymptomatic CVL-related thrombosis. The presence of symptoms reflects the site of obstruction and acuteness of obstruction as well as the methods of diagnosis or screening. In children, especially younger age group, the symptoms of TE are difficult to detect, and hence, even significant TE may go undiagnosed. Hence, a high index of suspicion is necessary. Table 12.3 lists the proposed risk factors predisposing to CVL-related thrombosis.
1. Pulmonary embolism (PE): potentially fatal complication. About 16% of children with CVL-related thrombosis developed PE, 3% with fatal PE.
2. Increased risk of infection: Proteins within the thrombus, such as fibrinogen and fibronectin, enhance the adherence of microorganisms such as staphylococci, resulting in CVL-related bloodstream infection.
3. CVL dysfunction: due to the blockage of the CVL tip.

Complications of CVL-Related Thrombosis [2,4,12–15]
4. Postthrombotic syndrome (PTS): long-term complication resulting in edema, skin discoloration, pain, and, in severe cases, skin ulceration. Significant PTS is reported in ~10–20% of children with CVL-related thrombosis.
5. Recurrent thrombosis: occurs in ~7–8% of children.

**Diagnosis of CVL-Related Thrombosis** [3, 12, 16, 17]

Because of the non-invasiveness and ease of performance, ultrasound (US) plus doppler is the preferred method for diagnosis of TE in children. The most reliable diagnostic criterion for thrombosis by US is noncompressibility of the vein.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.2</th>
<th>Summary of thrombolytic agents used for restoration of patency of blocked CVL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteplase</td>
<td>Tissue plasminogen activator produced by recombinant DNA from vascular epithelium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reteplase</td>
<td>Recombinant modified variant of human tPA produced from E. coli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recombinant urokinase</td>
<td>Recombinant urokinase produced by transfected mammalian cells</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.3</th>
<th>Proposed risk factors for development of CVL-related thrombosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of CVL</td>
<td>Internal lines (e.g., Port-A-Cath) are at higher risk of developing thrombosis than external lines (e.g., Hickman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of CVL</td>
<td>Longer duration of CVL dwell increases the risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple CVLs</td>
<td>Increase the risk of thrombosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVL insertion technique</td>
<td>CVLs inserted via venipuncture have increased risk of thrombosis compared to those inserted by venous cutdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site of insertion</td>
<td>CVLs located in left subclavian are at increased risk of thrombosis than those in right subclavian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection</td>
<td>Prior CVL infections are shown to increase the risk of thrombosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of underlying malignancy</td>
<td>Patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia or patients with mediastinal mass are shown to have higher risk of thrombosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVL dysfunction</td>
<td>Dysfunctional CVLs have increased association of thrombosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A solid material like a blood clot inside the lumen of a vessel prevents the vessel from being compressed with pressure. Thus, compressibility of the vessel rules out DVT on US. Other findings like intraluminal echogenicity or absence of doppler flow on US are relatively nonspecific and lack sensitivity. Although compression US is the diagnostic test of choice for suspected lower venous system deep venous thrombosis (DVT), it is not a sensitive technique for the diagnosis of DVT in upper venous system (central subclavian vein, brachiocephalic vein, and superior vena cava). Within the thoracic cage, the noncompressibility of the vessel cannot be assessed due to the presence of ribs. Hence, bilateral venogram is considered to be a gold standard for the diagnosis of DVT of the central vasculature. However, US is a reliable method for evaluation of jugular veins. Table 12.4 describes the advantages and disadvantages of various imaging techniques available for diagnosis of CVL-related DVT. In patients with suspected CVL-related DVT, we start with doppler ultrasound first. If negative and clinical suspicion is very strong, we proceed with venography. Sometimes other noninvasive tests like echocardiography may also be helpful to diagnose DVT. However, one may still like to have a venogram to define the extent of the clot and monitor the effects of anticoagulation.

### Table 12.4: Summary of pros and cons of various imaging modalities for diagnosis of CVL-related DVT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imaging modality</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doppler ultrasound</td>
<td>Noninvasive, easy access, cheap, and accurate for diagnosis of jugular vein and lower extremity DVT</td>
<td>Due to poor sensitivity, unsuitable for diagnosis of thrombosis in vessels within the thoracic cavity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venogram</td>
<td>Current gold standard for diagnosis with ~ 80% sensitivity</td>
<td>Invasive test with exposure to contrast dye and radiation, small children may require sedation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT venogram</td>
<td>Three-dimensional reconstruction improves the diagnostic accuracy</td>
<td>Radiation exposure, small children may require sedation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR venogram</td>
<td>No radiation exposure</td>
<td>Motion artifact may make interpretation difficult, high cost, sedation needed for small children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CVL central venous line, DVT deep venous thrombosis, CT computerized tomography, MR magnetic resonance*

---

**Management of CVL-Related Thrombosis**

The aims of management are reduction in acute morbidity and mortality and prevention or reduction of late complications. However, optimal management is controversial. The management is mainly dictated by the continued need for CVL. Figure 12.3 outlines the management of CVL-related thrombosis.
Fig. 12.3 Principles of management of CVL-related deep venous thrombosis. If a CVL is not functional or not required, it should be removed. Anticoagulation therapy with low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) is usually a preferred mode of therapy in children with cancer. In absence of standard guidelines, the duration of anticoagulation therapy is usually an individualized decision based on the need for continued use of the CVL, size of the clot and underlying prothrombotic condition. Usual duration of LMWH is 6–12 weeks after the CVL is removed. If the CVL remains in situ, the patient may continue prophylactic doses of LMWH after initial 6–12 weeks of anticoagulation therapy. Please refer to Chapter 11 for further details. CVL=Central venous line

Case 1
A 4-year-and-10-month-old girl underwent Port-A-Cath insertion for newly diagnosed ALL. There were ongoing issues with flushes and blood return, but there was no swelling or pain. Patient underwent linogram which demonstrated leakage of the contrast at the junction of the reservoir and the catheter. Patient underwent immediate port revision (Fig. 12.4).

Case 2
Eight year old girl with standard risk acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), on maintenance therapy on Dana-Farber Cancer Institute ALL Consortium protocol was noted to have dilated veins on upper chest and abdomen. Her port-a-cath had difficulties in bleeding back although it flushed well. She underwent two linograms
5 months apart (Fig. 12.5a and 12.5b) which were normal. Finally she underwent a venogram which confirmed an occlusive right subclavian and axillary vein thrombosis with extensive collateral veins (Fig. 12.5c).

**Case 3**
Seventeen year old patient was receiving chemotherapy for high risk ALL. At the time of diagnosis she received a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) which was later changed to port-a-cath in right jugular vein. She and her friends noted increasing prominence of chest veins especially on right side. There was no pain, tenderness or other problems. Her port has problems withdrawing blood back but otherwise infused well. She underwent an ultrasonography of upper venous system in July 2009 which reported patency of axillary, subclavian, basilic and jugular veins and did not detect any deep venous thrombosis. Bilateral venogram performed in August 2009 detected complete obstruction of the right subclavian vein from the level of first rib till innominate vein with extensive collateral formation. Collaterals were seen to ipsilateral jugular vein and contralateral brachiocephalic vein (Fig. 12.6a and 12.6b). Left sided arm veins were widely patent (Fig. 12.6c).
Fig. 12.5 (a) Linogram July 2005. (b) Linogram December 2005. (c) Venogram right upper venous system (December 2005)
Fig. 12.6  (a, b) Right arm venography showing subclavian vein occlusive thrombus and extensive collateral veins. c) Left arm venography showing widely open veins

References

Chapter 13
Chemotherapeutic Drugs

Paula MacDonald

Keywords  Asparaginase • Cell cycle • Chemotherapeutic agents • Cross sensitivity • Cytotoxic spill • Decontamination • Desensitization protocols • Extravasation • Glucarpidase • Hypersensitivity reactions • Leucovorin • Methotrexate • Necrotic tissue • Personal protective equipment • Renal clearance

Introduction

The goal of chemotherapy in the treatment of cancer is to kill malignant cells and prevent metastases. Cancer cells have a rapid rate of cellular division; therefore, chemotherapeutic agents are designed to destroy these rapidly dividing cells. It is important to understand the mechanism of action of the various classes of chemotherapy drugs as therapeutic protocols often use multiple drugs that may have synergistic or enhanced effect against malignant cells when used in combination. Knowledge of how these drugs work is also important in predicting potential toxic effects, thus allowing for the development of chemotherapy regimens that minimize the risk of severe toxicity through the combination of agents with different side effect profiles.

Classes of Chemotherapeutic Drugs

Chemotherapeutic agents can be divided into several classes based on mechanism of action, chemical structure, biologic source, or effect on the cell cycle. These agents were formerly classified on the basis of where they act in the cell cycle. Cell cycle-specific drugs act only on a specific stage of the cell cycle (e.g., methotrexate affects...
cells during DNA synthesis or S phase), while cell cycle-nonspecific chemotherapy drugs affect cells during all stages of the cell cycle, including resting cells. However, there are too many exceptions to this classification. A more useful means of classifying these agents is on the basis of their mechanism of action and derivation [1]. Table 13.1 describes the various categories of chemotherapeutic agents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Mechanism of action</th>
<th>Common toxicities</th>
<th>Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alkylating agents</td>
<td>Interfere with DNA replication and transcription by cross-linking DNA strands, causing DNA strand breakage and abnormal base pairing</td>
<td><em>Myelosuppression</em>&lt;br&gt;Other common toxicities:&lt;br&gt;nausea, vomiting, alopecia, reduced fertility, secondary malignancies&lt;br&gt;Nephrotoxicity (cisplatin, cyclophosphamide, ifosfamide)</td>
<td>Busulfan&lt;br&gt;Carmustine (BCNU)&lt;br&gt;Carboplatin&lt;br&gt;Cisplatin&lt;br&gt;Chlorambucil&lt;br&gt;Cyclophosphamide&lt;br&gt;Dacarbazine (DTIC)&lt;br&gt;Ifosfamide&lt;br&gt;LMustine (CCNU)&lt;br&gt;Melphalan&lt;br&gt;Oxaliplatin&lt;br&gt;Procarbazine&lt;br&gt;Thiotepa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimetabolites</td>
<td>Structural analogues of nucleotide bases that interfere with synthesis of protein, DNA, and RNA in the cell (ref 1)</td>
<td><em>Myelosuppression</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Gastrointestinal mucositis</em> (including stomatitis, diarrhea)&lt;br&gt;Other common toxicities:&lt;br&gt;nausea, vomiting&lt;br&gt;elevated transaminases (methotrexate)&lt;br&gt;conjunctivitis (high-dose Ara-C)</td>
<td>Folic acid antagonists&lt;br&gt;Methotrexate&lt;br&gt;Purine antagonists&lt;br&gt;Pyrimidine antagonists&lt;br&gt;5-Azacytidine&lt;br&gt;5-Fluorouracil&lt;br&gt;Cytosine arabinoside (Ara-C)&lt;br&gt;Gemcitabine&lt;br&gt;Mitomycin-C&lt;br&gt;Cladribine&lt;br&gt;Fludarabine&lt;br&gt;Daunorubicin&lt;br&gt;Doxorubicin&lt;br&gt;Idarubicin&lt;br&gt;Mitoxantrone&lt;br&gt;Bleomycin&lt;br&gt;Dactinomycin&lt;br&gt;Mitomycin-C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antitumor antibiotics</td>
<td>Covalently bind DNA; interfere with RNA transcription and DNA replication, Anthracyclines also associated with free radical formation and inhibition of topoisomerase II enzyme</td>
<td><em>Myelosuppression</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Cardiomyopathy</em> (cumulative effect with anthracyclines)&lt;br&gt;Other common toxicities:&lt;br&gt;oral mucositis, alopecia, nausea, vomiting, secondary malignancies, hepatotoxicity, radiation recall</td>
<td>Anthracyclines&lt;br&gt;Daunorubicin&lt;br&gt;Doxorubicin&lt;br&gt;Idarubicin&lt;br&gt;Mitoxantrone&lt;br&gt;Bleomycin&lt;br&gt;Dactinomycin&lt;br&gt;Mitomycin-C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Mechanism of action</th>
<th>Common toxicities</th>
<th>Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Topoisomerase I  inhibitors | Inhibit DNA and RNA synthesis by preventing the unwinding of DNA strands (via inhibition of the enzyme topoisomerase I) | *Myelosuppression* Other common toxicities: nausea, vomiting, alopecia *Diarrhea (irinotecan)* secondary malignancies | Camptothecin     
Irinotecan   
Topotecan (*)These agents could also be classified as alkylating agents |
| Plant alkaloids  | Vinca alkaloids inhibit mitotic spindle formation by binding to tubulin (arrest cells in metaphase) | *Myelosuppression* (vinblastine, vinorelbine, etoposide, teniposide, taxanes) *Peripheral neuropathy* (vincristine, paclitaxel) Other common toxicities: nausea, vomiting, alopecia, hypotension (with rapid etoposide infusion), constipation, jaw pain (vincristine) | Vinca alkaloids     
Vinorelbine     
Vinblastine     
Vincristine  Epipodophyllotoxins Etoposide (VP-16) Teniposide (VM-26) Taxanes Docetaxel Paclitaxel |
| Epipodophyllotoxins | Inhibit topoisomerase II enzyme and produce DNA strand breaks | | |
| Taxanes bind to microtubules and inhibit their disassembly; M phase-specific | | | |
| Corticosteroids  | Exact mechanism not fully understood. Steroids appear to form a complex with macromolecules in the cytoplasm of the cell, which binds with DNA and modifies the transcription process. (ref 1) | Acne Cushingoid appearance Fluid/sodium retention Gastric ulcers, reflux (give with food) Hyperglycemia Hyperphagia Hypertension Immunosuppression Insomnia Personality/mood changes Pituitary–adrenal suppression Osteopenia/osteoporosis Avascular necrosis | Dexamethasone Hydrocortisone Methylprednisolone Prednisone |
| Direct lytic action in leukemia and lymphoma cells | | | |
| Miscellaneous agents | Hydroxyurea interferes with ribonucleotide reductase enzyme and inhibits DNA synthesis | Hydroxyurea: *Myelosuppression* nausea, vomiting, diarrhea L-Asparaginase: *Hypersensitivity reactions* (including urticaria, angioedema, bronchospasm, hypotension), hyperglycemia, thrombosis, acute pancreatitis | Hydroxyurea L-Asparaginase (derived from *Escherichia coli* or *Erwinia* bacteria) PEG-L-Asparaginase (coated with polyethylene glycol to reduce immunogenicity) |
| L-Asparaginase (enzyme) | hydrolyzes serum asparagine to aspartic acid and ammonia, depleting asparagine and inhibiting protein synthesis in leukemia cells | | |

* A dose-limiting toxicity
There are other agents and biological treatments used to treat cancer that are not classified as chemotherapy [3]. These agents have been designed to target specific malignant cells rather than normal, healthy cells and often have less serious side effects than chemotherapeutic agents (Table 13.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13.2  Biological therapies for cancer [1, 4, 5]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targeted therapies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed to attack cancer cells with mutated versions of certain genes or cells overexpressing copies of a specific gene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Differentiating agents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The retinoids are naturally occurring analogues of vitamin A that induce tumor cell differentiation and maturation, leading to apoptosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common side effects of the retinoids</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>include dry skin and mucosa, photosensitivity, and elevated serum triglyceride levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biotherapy (immunotherapy)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of biologically derived agents to activate the immune system to more effectively recognize and attack cancer cells⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active immunotherapies stimulate the body’s own immune system to fight cancer and include interferons, interleukins, and cancer vaccines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive immunotherapies (i.e., monoclonal antibodies) stimulate cell kill by targeting proteins on the surface of cancer cells, thus marking the cells for destruction by the immune system. They can also target chemotherapy or radioactive isotopes to the cancer cells directly or block receptors that receive growth signals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methotrexate Clearance and Toxicity

Methotrexate (MTX), a folic acid antagonist, competes with dihydrofolate to bind to the enzyme, dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR). This leads to inhibition of tetrahydrofolate synthesis and a reduction in intracellular reduced folates. Once the pools of reduced folates are depleted, DNA synthesis stops, and the result is serious toxicity to both tumor cells and normal cells within the body [1].

Methotrexate undergoes hepatic metabolism, but the primary route of elimination during the first 24 h is renal excretion of the unmetabolized drug [6]. Renal clearance of MTX involves glomerular filtration, active tubular secretion, and tubular reabsorption [6, 7]. Reduced renal function results in an increased elimination half-life of MTX and predisposes the patient to adverse effects, such as mucositis, pancytopenia, gastrointestinal desquamation, and hepatotoxicity [6]. Methotrexate can also accumulate in body cavities and fluid collections, such as ascites and pleural effusions, from which it will slowly redistribute [1]. This release from “third space” fluid collections can lead to excessive toxicity. Drainage of such collections is recommended prior to MTX administration when possible [8].

High doses of MTX (i.e., 1–20 g/m²) in treatment protocols for lymphoma, leukemia, and osteogenic sarcoma have the potential to cause severe and potentially fatal toxicities. Patients receiving such doses require routine monitoring of serum creatinine and plasma MTX concentrations following administration [1]. High-dose methotrexate (HDMTX) produces MTX concentrations in the urine above the solubility index at a pH <7. This may result in precipitation of MTX and its metabolites in the acidic urine, causing obstruction of the kidney tubules. Tubular injury could lead to HDMTX-induced acute renal failure, which is a medical emergency. Adequate hydration (intravenous fluids at 125 mL/m²/h) and urine alkalinization (urine pH ≥7 and ≤8) with sodium bicarbonate are required with HDMTX to prevent renal toxicity [1, 6, 9].

Leucovorin (folinic acid) administration is also required to prevent severe toxicity with MTX doses greater than or equal to 500 mg/m² [8, 9]. Leucovorin is a derivative of tetrahydrofolic acid (i.e., a reduced folate) that can rescue normal cells from the toxicity of HDMTX by replenishing these cells with an alternative source of reduced folate for DNA synthesis. Dosing of leucovorin depends on the individual protocol but is usually 12–15 mg/m² administered every 6 h starting 24–48 h after the MTX infusion and continuing until the plasma MTX concentration falls <0.05–0.1 μmol/L [1, 8, 9].

Renal clearance of MTX may be inhibited by the concomitant administration of the following medications, potentially leading to increased plasma levels of MTX and an increased risk of MTX associated toxicity [6, 8, 9]:

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen
- Proton pump inhibitors, e.g., omeprazole, pantoprazole
- Penicillins, e.g., amoxicillin, piperacillin, ticarcillin
- Salicylates, e.g., acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- Sulfonamides, e.g., co-trimoxazole, sulfamethoxazole, sulfisoxazole
- Probenecid
Glucarpidase (formerly known as carboxypeptidase-G2) can be used to treat patients at risk for methotrexate toxicity secondary to delayed elimination (i.e., patients with HDMTX-induced renal failure and extremely elevated MTX levels). It is a recombinant bacterial enzyme that hydrolyzes MTX to an inactive metabolite. It can rapidly lower serum MTX levels by >95% within 15 min of administration [8, 10]. The dose is 50 units/kg given intravenously over 5 min. A second dose may be given within 24–48 h for MTX levels >100 μmol/L. High-dose leucovorin (1,000 mg/m² IV every 6 h) should be given 2–4 h before or after administration of glucarpidase [8, 10]. Glucarpidase is an investigational agent in Canada and can be obtained via the Health Canada Special Access Programme [8].

Hypersensitivity Reactions Related to Chemotherapeutic Agents

Hypersensitivity reactions (HSRs) to chemotherapeutic agents are defined as unexpected reactions with signs and symptoms not consistent with known toxicities of these drugs [11]. These reactions may affect any organ system in the body, and their severity ranges from mild flushing to anaphylaxis [11, 12]. Most chemotherapy drugs have the potential to cause HSRs [13], but there are groups of agents that have a high risk of such reactions, including the asparaginases, taxanes, platinum compounds, and epipodophyllotoxins [11–14]. The overall incidence of HSRs to chemotherapy drugs is reported to be approximately 5% [13]; however, this incidence is expected to rise as use of these agents in clinical practice continues to increase.

The exact mechanisms of hypersensitivity to chemotherapy are not fully understood. It appears that most acute reactions are related to type I hypersensitivity [11, 12]. (Table 13.3 summarizes the categories of HSRs.) Multiple factors such as drug form, route and rate of administration, and previous drug exposure affect the possibility of an HSR [11]. Excipients (i.e., substances used as diluent or a vehicle for a drug) such as Cremophor® (registered), EL in paclitaxel, and teniposide solutions have also been implicated as a potential cause of HSRs [11, 13, 14] (Tables 13.3 and 13.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of HSR</th>
<th>Mechanism of action</th>
<th>Signs and symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Immediate hypersensitivity; IgE-mediated</td>
<td>Urticaria, pruritus, fever, anaphylaxis, angioedema, bronchospasm, hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Antibody-mediated; IgG- or IgM-mediated</td>
<td>Hemolysis is most common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Immune-complex mediated</td>
<td>Vasculitis, nephritis, arthritis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Delayed or cell-mediated; T lymphocyte activation</td>
<td>Graft rejection, contact dermatitis, granuloma formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Ig_ immunoglobulin
Table 13.4  Main characteristics of hypersensitivity reactions to chemotherapeutic agents [11, 14]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chemotherapy agent</th>
<th>Incidence of HSRs (%)</th>
<th>Time of initial onset</th>
<th>Description of HSR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L-asparaginase</td>
<td>6–43% (after IV administration; &lt;10% are serious)</td>
<td>Within 1st hour of administration/2 weeks after initiation</td>
<td>Urticaria, rash (most occur after two weeks), flushing, bronchospasm, hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carboplatin</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Within minutes to days/monthly after 7th course</td>
<td>Urticaria, rash (mostly after cycles 6–8), bronchospasm, hypotension, edema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisplatin</td>
<td>5–20</td>
<td>Within minutes/between 4th and 8th courses</td>
<td>Rash, pruritus, fever, cough, bronchospasm, hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxaliplatin</td>
<td>10–20</td>
<td>Within minutes to hours/after 8th course</td>
<td>Urticaria, fever, bronchospasm, rash, hypotension, hemolysis, joint pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docetaxel</td>
<td>25–50</td>
<td>First minutes of infusion/during 1st or 2nd cycle</td>
<td>Urticaria, bronchospasm, dyspnea, heart rate fluctuations, angioedema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paclitaxel</td>
<td>8–45</td>
<td>First minutes of infusion/during 1st or 2nd cycle</td>
<td>Urticaria, bronchospasm, hypotension (common with 1st or 2nd dose), flushing, chest pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epipodophyllotoxins</td>
<td>0.7–14</td>
<td>After repeated exposure</td>
<td>Hypotension, bronchospasm, dyspnea, rash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prevention of HSRs to chemotherapy is the primary goal, and protocols to prevent or reduce the severity of these reactions have been developed. The likelihood of an HSR increases with repeated exposure to L-asparaginase, platinum compounds, and the epipodophyllotoxins [13]. Skin testing can be performed on patients with a history of drug allergies or exposure to these agents. There are some reports of successful skin testing with carboplatin, oxaliplatin, and L-asparaginase, but this is not a standard practice as it has not been validated.

No standard desensitization protocols exist for chemotherapeutic agents. Many of the published recommendations are based on case reports with variable success [13]. There are also no standard premedication regimens to prevent HSRs to chemotherapy drugs, although several regimens have been proposed. Medications commonly used include corticosteroids (e.g., dexamethasone or equivalent), histamine 1 antagonists (e.g., diphenhydramine), histamine 2 antagonists (e.g., ranitidine), and antipyretics (e.g., acetaminophen). For example, premedication with a corticosteroid and an antihistamine is standard practice prior to administration of paclitaxel or docetaxel and successfully reduces the incidence of HSRs to 2–4% [13, 14]. However, premedication has not proven successful in prevention of HSRs with platinum compounds or epipodophyllotoxins [11, 13].
In patients with a history of HSR to *E. coli*-derived L-asparaginase, a common strategy is to switch to a different preparation such as *Erwinia*-derived L-asparaginase or a polyethylene glycol–modified preparation (i.e., PEG-asparaginase) [11, 14]. Crossover reactions can occur in up to 23% of patients [11]. In some studies, docetaxel has been tolerated by patients who have had reactions to paclitaxel [13], but other studies have reported 90% cross-reactivity [11, 12, 14]. The true incidence of cross sensitivity between cisplatin and carboplatin is not defined because of limited studies [11, 14]. Successful substitution of carboplatin with cisplatin has been variable in preventing HSRs. The epipodophyllotoxins have not been found to develop cross-reactivity; however, because they are used to treat different cancers, they have not been substituted for one another [13].

HSRs to chemotherapeutic agents still happen despite the use of appropriate prevention strategies. Therefore, it is important to recognize these reactions quickly. In the event of an HSR, the primary intervention should be to discontinue the infusion of the offending agent while maintaining patent vascular access [12]. The ABCs of resuscitation (airway, breathing, and circulation) are then followed based on the patient’s symptoms. Other first-line therapies for patients with severe HSRs include oxygen, epinephrine, and intravenous fluids (Table 13.5).
Extravasation (Paravasat) Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extravasation</td>
<td>The inadvertent leakage or escape of a drug or fluid from a vein during intravenous administration [16, 17].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vesicant</td>
<td>Agent capable of causing blistering, tissue damage, and/or necrosis after leakage into a vein or surrounding tissue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritant</td>
<td>Agent that may cause pain in the vein or surrounding tissue, an inflammatory response with or without erythema, sclerosis, and hyperpigmentation along the vein during administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flare</td>
<td>Painless local reaction along the vein or near the injection site, characterized by red blotches or streaks along the vessel with or without pruritus or irritation; symptoms usually subside 30 min after infusion is stopped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-DNA-binding vesicants</td>
<td>e.g., <em>Vincristine, vinblastine</em> cause rapid tissue damage similar to a burn; injury is localized and heals without additional tissue damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA-binding vesicants</td>
<td>e.g., <em>Anthracyclines</em> (<em>doxorubicin, daunorubicin, idarubicin, mitoxantrone</em>), <em>antitumor antibiotics</em>, and <em>some alkylating agents</em> become trapped in the tissues and cause skin blistering and ulcer formation over several weeks; damage continues as necrotic tissue releases the drug over weeks, eventually extending to underlying tendons, ligaments, nerves, and bone, causing severe pain and functional deficit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extravasation of chemotherapeutic agents can be a rare but serious complication of cancer treatment. Although it is believed to be underreported, extravasation is estimated to occur in 0.1–0.6% of peripheral intravenous infusions and in 0.3–4.7% of implanted venous access device (VAD) infusions [17, 18]. Most incidents of extravasation are preventable. If an extravasation does occur, early and aggressive intervention is essential to minimize the risk of serious damage (Tables 13.6–13.8 and Fig. 13.1).

Cytotoxic spills Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cytotoxic agent</td>
<td>A pharmacologic compound that is detrimental or destructive to cells within the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cytotoxic waste</td>
<td>Unused cytotoxic drugs, tubing, needles, or other items that have come into contact with cytotoxic agents [20].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>Any contact with cytotoxic agents that may carry some health risk. Four potential routes of exposure to chemotherapy agents are inhalation, ingestion, injection, and absorption (through skin and eyes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal protective equipment: items such as gloves, gowns, respirators, goggles, face shields, and others that protect individual workers from hazardous physical or chemical exposures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small spills</td>
<td>A small cytotoxic spill is defined as an incident resulting in a chemotherapy spill of quantities less than or equaling 100 mL. Proper cleanup should be performed by staff members (usually nurses) with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large spills</td>
<td>A large spill is defined as any incident resulting in a chemotherapy spill of quantities more than 100 mL. Management of large spills may need to be coordinated through an external spill response agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 13.6 Assessment of extravasation versus other reactions [16, 19]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment parameter</th>
<th>Immediate extravasation</th>
<th>Delayed extravasation</th>
<th>Spasm/irritation of the vein</th>
<th>Flare reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Severe pain or burning lasting for minutes or hours, which eventually subsides; usually occurs around needle site while drug is being given</td>
<td>48 h</td>
<td>Aching and tightness along the vein</td>
<td>Ranges from no pain to aching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redness</td>
<td>Blotchy redness around needle site; not always present at time of extravasation</td>
<td>Hours to months</td>
<td>Full length of vein may be reddened or darkened</td>
<td>Immediate blotches or streaks along vein, usually subsides within 30 min with or without treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulceration</td>
<td>Develops insidiously (usually occurs 48–96 h later)</td>
<td>Hours to months</td>
<td>Not usually</td>
<td>Not usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swelling</td>
<td>Severe swelling; usually occurs immediately</td>
<td>48 h</td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Not likely; wheals may appear along vein line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood return</td>
<td>Inability to obtain blood return</td>
<td>Good blood return during administration</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Change in quality of infusion</td>
<td>Local tingling and sensory deficits</td>
<td>Possible resistance felt on injection</td>
<td>Urticaria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Cancer Chemotherapy Guidelines

### Table 13.7 Categories of chemotherapy agents based on extravasation risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vesicant</th>
<th>Nonvesicant</th>
<th>Irritant</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amscarine</td>
<td>Bortezimib</td>
<td>Aldesleukin (IL-2)</td>
<td>Interferon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busulfan</td>
<td>Cisplatin</td>
<td>Asparaginase</td>
<td>Leucovorin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmustine</td>
<td>DaCarbazine</td>
<td>Azacytidine</td>
<td>Leuprolide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dactinomycin</td>
<td>Docetaxel</td>
<td>BCG</td>
<td>Methotrexate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daunorubicin</td>
<td>Etoposide</td>
<td>Bevacizumab</td>
<td>Rituximab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doxorubicin</td>
<td>Fluorouracil</td>
<td>Bleomycin</td>
<td>Thiotepa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epirubicin</td>
<td>Ifosfamide</td>
<td>Carboplatin</td>
<td>Topotecan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idarubicin</td>
<td>Irinotecan</td>
<td>Cladribine</td>
<td>Trastuzumab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechlorethamine</td>
<td>Mitoxantrone</td>
<td>Clofarabine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melphalan</td>
<td>Oxaliplatin</td>
<td>Cyclophosphamide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitomycin</td>
<td>Paclitaxel</td>
<td>Cytarabine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinblastine</td>
<td>Temozolomide</td>
<td>Dexrazoxane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincristine</td>
<td>Teniposide</td>
<td>Fludarabine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinorelbine</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gemcitabine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemotherapy agent</td>
<td>Local care</td>
<td>Antidote recommended</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisplatin</td>
<td>Cold compress</td>
<td>Sodium thiosulfate</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To prepare 4.1% solution, mix 1.6 mL of 25% sodium thiosulfate with 8.4 mL of sterile water for injection or 0.9% NaCl</td>
<td>Antidote only indicated for large-volume (&gt; 20 mL) extravasations of a concentrated solution (&gt;0.4 mg/mL) Administer through existing IV line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daunorubicin</td>
<td>Cold compress</td>
<td>Dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) 50%</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doxorubicin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply 4 drops/10 cm² skin surface to site 3–4 times/day for 7–14 days. Allow to air-dry. Do not cover</td>
<td>Do not apply heat; it may worsen injury Protect from heat and sunlight Corticosteroids worsen toxicity Avoid direct contact with DMSO (double gloves and metal forceps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idarubicin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitoxantrone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitomycin-C</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) 50%</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply 4 drops/10 cm² skin surface to site 3–4 times/day for 7–14 days. Allow to air-dry. Do not cover</td>
<td>Do not apply heat; it may worsen injury Protect from heat and sunlight Avoid direct contact with DMSO (double gloves and metal forceps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epipodophyllotoxins</td>
<td>Warm compress</td>
<td>Hyaluronidase</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(etoposide, teniposide)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reconstitute to 150 units/mL</td>
<td>Hyaluronidase only for large-volume extravasations of concentrated solutions Immediate onset of action with a 24–48-h duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare 5-mL x 0.2-mL injections and inject around site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not for IV administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechlorethamine</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Sodium thiosulfate</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To prepare 4.1% solution, mix 1.6 mL of 25% sodium thiosulfate with 8.4 mL of sterile water for injection or 0.9% NaCl</td>
<td>Timely administration is crucial Administer through existing IV line</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Cytotoxic drug spills should be managed according to established, written policies and procedures for each workplace. Cytotoxic spill kits must be available in all areas where cytotoxic drugs are prepared, dispensed, administered, received, stored, and disposed. Spills involving these agents should be cleaned by staff members with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and equipment. The size of the spill might determine who is authorized to conduct the cleanup and decontamination and how the cleanup is managed (Tables 13.9 and 13.10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chemotherapy agent</th>
<th>Local care</th>
<th>Antidote recommended</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paclitaxel</td>
<td>Cold compress (ice pack for 15–20 min at least four times/day × 24 h)</td>
<td>Hyaluronidase Reconstitute to 150 units/mL Prepare 5-mL × 0.2-mL injections and inject around site Not for IV administration</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Immediate onset of action with a 24–48-h duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinblastine</td>
<td>Warm compress</td>
<td>Hyaluronidase Reconstitute to 150 units/mL Prepare 5-mL × 0.2-mL injections and inject around site Not for IV administration</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Corticosteroids and topical cooling worsen toxicity Immediate onset of action with a 24–48-h duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincristine</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Corticosteroids and topical cooling worsen toxicity Immediate onset of action with a 24–48-h duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinorelbine</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Corticosteroids and topical cooling worsen toxicity Immediate onset of action with a 24–48-h duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmustine</td>
<td>Cold compress</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dactinomycin</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Protect from heat and sunlight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacarbazine</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Protect from heat and sunlight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docetaxel</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Protect from heat and sunlight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melphalan</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Protect from heat and sunlight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxaliplatin</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Elevate site of extravasation Protect from heat and sunlight</td>
<td>DO NOT APPLY COLD. Cold can precipitate acute neurotoxicity Early administration of corticosteroids may be beneficial to decrease inflammation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 13.1 Management algorithm for suspected extravasation of chemotherapy

- Stop infusion/administration of agent immediately if extravasation suspected
- Notify physician, nurse practitioner and pharmacist immediately.
- Disconnect IV tubing, attach 10 cc sterile syringe to cannula. Attempt to aspirate residual drug from site.
- Mark site of extravasation. Avoid pressure to site.
- Cover site lightly with sterile dressing. Apply DMSO if applicable. *(refer to Table 13.8)*
- Apply cold or warm compresses (if applicable) to area for 15-30 minutes 4 times/day for 24 hours
- Elevate affected limb if applicable for 48 hours
- Physician to view site and order pharmacologic treatments dependent on agent *(refer to Table 13.8)*
- Plastic surgery consult/photograph site
- Documentation
- Follow Up
  - Arrange follow up assessments at 24 hours, then at days 5, 7, 14. Continue weekly as necessary. (may be more frequent depending on agent and amount infiltrated)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</th>
<th>Other supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hands</strong></td>
<td>Chemotherapy-approved powder-free gloves along with snug fitting cuffs, made of latex or nitrile</td>
<td>Should include 2-pair gloves, gown, shoe coverings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NIOSH standards recommend double gloving, with the outer glove extending over the cuff of the gown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td>Disposable gowns made of polyethylene-coated polypropylene (nonlinting and nonabsorbent). Gowns</td>
<td>Cleaning supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>should have closed fronts, long sleeves, and elastic or knit-closed cuffs</td>
<td>Hospital detergent solution, disposable absorbent pads, bucket, and mop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye/face</strong></td>
<td>Face shield or goggles. Goggles only protect eyes, while face shield protects eyes, nose, and mouth.</td>
<td>Sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wear in addition to corrective eyewear</td>
<td>Reusable or disposable cytotoxic sharps container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respiratory</strong></td>
<td>A hospital approved, individually fitted N95 respirator</td>
<td>Waste container and labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A surgical mask does not offer respiratory protection</td>
<td>Dispose all spill cleanup materials in a hazardous chemical waste container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feet</strong></td>
<td>Disposable shoe coverings</td>
<td>Label all waste with cytotoxic stickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contains summaries provided by the manufacturer to describe properties and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hazards of specific chemicals and ways workers can protect themselves from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>exposure to these chemicals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NIOSH* National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Table 13.10  Recommended cytotoxic spill cleanup procedures [20, 21]

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A. Preparation** | 1. Collect equipment and supplies  
2. Follow Spill Kit instructions  
3. Restrict access to spill area and post appropriate signs  
4. Put on PPE |
| **B. Contain spill** | Liquid spills – lay absorbent pads over spill to absorb the liquid and turn it into a gel  
Solid spills – gently cover and remove powder spills with damp absorbent pads; wipe solids with wet absorbent pads  
Sharps – use a scoop to place broken glass into a cytotoxic sharps container |
| **C. Clean area** | Initial cleanup: Clean spill area and nondisposable items three times with disinfectant solution and absorbent pads  
Final cleanup: Rinse area twice with clean water |
| **D. Disposal** | Place contaminated absorbent pads and all PPE in appropriate hazardous waste container or bag. Label with cytotoxic sticker  
Any disposable items that have come in contact with cytotoxic agent (e.g., linens) should be disposed of in hazardous waste container |
| **E. Documentation** (e.g., Safety Occurrence Report) | • Agent and volume spilled  
• Immediate and basic causes of spill  
• Spill management procedures followed  
• Personnel, patient, and others exposed to the spill  
• Corrective actions implemented to prevent a similar occurrence in future |

References

22. The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. PPE and management of chemotherapy spills policy, UTMDACC institutional policy # ADM0171, 1–12.
Chapter 14
Supportive Care

Paula MacDonald

Keywords 5-HT₃ receptor • Anticipatory emesis • Candida sp. • Electrolyte replacement • Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) • Medullary bone pain • Myelosuppression • Nausea • Oral magnesium supplementation • Pneumocystis prophylaxis • Prolonged neutropenia • Splenomegaly • Thrombocytopenia • Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole • Vomiting

Introduction

The treatment of cancer is commonly associated with pain, nausea, and other distressing symptoms. Therefore, a primary goal in the medical management of pediatric cancer patients is symptom management through supportive care. Aggressive supportive care can improve outcomes for children with cancer, especially in high-risk patients. For example, nausea and vomiting are considered by many patients to be among the most debilitating side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. The impact of inadequately controlled nausea and vomiting on patients’ quality of life is substantial, and administration of prophylactic antiemetics has become a standard of supportive care in children receiving treatment for cancer. The use of prophylaxis against Pneumocystis jirovecii (formerly carinii) pneumonia (PCP) has also become a routine part of management of many childhood cancers. Other supportive measures commonly required in the care of pediatric oncology patients include fungal prophylaxis, electrolyte supplementation, administration of prophylactic granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF), and therapeutic amenorrhea.

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Nausea and vomiting are two of the most distressing side effects experienced by cancer patients despite major advances that have led to improved pharmacological options for control of these symptoms. Nausea often occurs with vomiting; however, either can occur independently. Without effective prophylaxis, these symptoms can lead to severe dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, and emotional or psychological distress. Chemotherapy and radiation are well-known causes of nausea and vomiting; however, cancer patients may also experience these symptoms secondary to metastatic disease, increased intracranial pressure, metabolic disturbances, delayed gastric emptying, gastrointestinal obstruction, anesthetic agents, and opioids. Psychological factors (i.e., anxiety and patient’s prior experiences with nausea and vomiting) can also contribute to chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV).

### Pathophysiology of Nausea and Vomiting

Vomiting occurs when central or peripheral neurologic pathways stimulate the vomiting center located in the brainstem. Chemotherapeutic agents induce vomiting by stimulating the vomiting center directly or by stimulation of the chemotherapy trigger zone (CTZ) located in the floor of the fourth ventricle in the vicinity of the area postrema. Chemotherapy causes the release of emetic neurotransmitters that stimulate the CTZ which in turn activates the vomiting center to produce nausea and vomiting. Neurotransmitters that stimulate the CTZ include serotonin (5-HT), dopamine (D₂), histamine (H₁), and acetylcholine (ACh). Enterochromaffin cells in the intestinal mucosa are rich in 5-HT and D₂ receptors, and damage induced by chemotherapy, radiation, or bowel distension can result in a massive release of (5-HT).

Chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting can be acute, delayed, or anticipatory. Acute symptoms occur during the first 24 h after chemotherapy administration and tend to be responsive to drug therapy. Delayed nausea and vomiting occur more than 24 h after treatment and can persist for several days. It is less common in children than in adults and is not very responsive to drug therapy. Most patients experience delayed symptoms after receiving cisplatin. Anticipatory emesis occurs before chemotherapy is given and is difficult to treat because it is a conditioned response that may be related to anxiety. More than half of pediatric cancer patients experience anticipatory symptoms. Conditioned responses are more likely if nausea and vomiting with early chemotherapy cycles is not well controlled. Antiemetics do not effectively control anticipatory symptoms once they have developed.
Therefore, effective prevention of acute nausea and vomiting can reduce the risk of delayed or anticipatory symptoms [2, 3].

The incidence and severity of CINV are affected by both patient- and treatment-related factors. A higher risk is associated with female gender, age greater than 3 years, anxiety, history of motion sickness, and poor control with previous chemotherapy [3]. Treatment-related risk factors include the emetogenicity, schedule, dose, route, and rate of drug administration. The most important factor is the intrinsic emetogenicity of the chemotherapy agent. Table 14.1 summarizes the emetogenic potential of commonly used chemotherapeutic agents. Antiemetics are most effective when given prophylactically; therefore, routine use of antiemetics is recommended for pediatric patients receiving emetogenic chemotherapy and radiation to the brain and abdomen/pelvis [4]. When these chemotherapy agents are used in combination, antiemetic prophylaxis should be based on the most emetic component of the regimen. Antiemetic regimens should also be individualized based on patient tolerance.

The following factors should be considered when selecting an antiemetic regimen:

1. Emetogenic potential of chemotherapeutic agents and/or radiation
2. Patient’s tolerance of previous chemotherapy
3. Expected onset and duration of nausea and vomiting
4. Presence of anticipatory nausea and vomiting
5. Concomitant medications or medical conditions that increase risk of symptoms
6. History of allergy or adverse reaction to antiemetic agents

The primary goal of antiemetic therapy is complete prevention of treatment-related nausea and vomiting. The combination of a 5-HT₃ receptor antagonist with dexamethasone is the standard of care for prevention of acute CINV induced by moderate to highly emetogenic chemotherapy in children. Lorazepam and diphenhydramine are useful adjuncts to the antiemetic regimen but are not recommended as single agents. Metoclopramide, prochlorperazine, and cannabinoids should be reserved for patients intolerant of or refractory to first-line antiemetics. All antiemetics, with the exception of aprepitant, should be administered on a routine schedule (“round-the-clock”), not as needed (“prn”), for at least 24 h after chemotherapy [10].

Novel or emerging agents, including metopimazine, olanzapine, and gabapentin, may have a future role to play in emetic control. However, there is insufficient published pediatric experience with these agents for the prevention of CINV, and they are not currently considered for routine use [7] (Table 14.2).

**Pneumocystis Prophylaxis**

*Pneumocystis jirovecii* (formerly *carinii*) pneumonia (PCP) is a serious complication in pediatric oncology patients. Children and adolescents with cancer are at an increased risk for developing this opportunistic infection due to immunosuppression...
Table 14.1  Emetogenicity of chemotherapeutic agents and radiation therapy [3–6]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very high risk ( &gt;90% frequency)</th>
<th>High risk (60–90% frequency)</th>
<th>Moderate risk (30–60% frequency)</th>
<th>Moderate to low (10–30% frequency)</th>
<th>Low risk (&lt;10% frequency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carmustine (≥200 mg/m²)</td>
<td>Carboplatin</td>
<td>Cyclophosphamide (≤750 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Bortezomib</td>
<td>Asparaginase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisplatin (≥50 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Carmustine (&lt;200 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Dactinomycin (≤1.5 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Cytarabine (&lt;1 g/m³)</td>
<td>Bleomycin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclophosphamide (&gt;1,500 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Cisplatin (&lt;50 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Doxorubicin (20–60 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Daunorubicin (&lt;45 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Busulfan (oral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacarbazine (≥500 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Clofarabine</td>
<td>Idarubicin</td>
<td>Docetaxel</td>
<td>Cladribine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifosfamide (≥1,500 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Cyclophosphamide (&gt;750 &amp; ≤1,500 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Ifosfamide (≤1,500 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Etoposide</td>
<td>Cyclophosphamide (oral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomustine (&gt;60 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Cytarabine (≥1 g/m³)</td>
<td>Methotrexate (250–1,000 mg/m²)</td>
<td>Fluorouracil (≤1 g/m³)</td>
<td>Cytarabine (&lt;100 mg/m³)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechlorethamine</td>
<td>Dactinomycin (&gt;1.5 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gemcitabine</td>
<td>Dexrazoxane</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dacarbazine (&lt;500 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Methotrexate (&gt;50 &amp; &lt;250 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Fludarabine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daunorubicin (≥45 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mitomycin (&lt;8 mg/m³)</td>
<td>Gefitinib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doxorubicin (≥60 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mitoxantrone</td>
<td>Hydroxyurea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Irinotecan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neltarbine</td>
<td>Imatinib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lomustine (≤ 60 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paclitaxel</td>
<td>Isotretinoin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methotrexate (&gt;1 g/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teniposide</td>
<td>Methotrexate (&lt;50 mg/m³)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mitomycin (≥8 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Topotecan</td>
<td>Melphalan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oxaliplatin (&gt;75 mg/m³)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Triple intrathecal chemotherapy</td>
<td>Mercaptopurine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procarbazine</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdominal/pelvic or craniospinal irradiation</td>
<td>Temozolomide</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total body irradiation (TBI)</td>
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<td>Thioguani</td>
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<td>Trastuzumab</td>
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<td>Vinblastine</td>
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<td>Vincristine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vinorelbine</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head/neck/cranial/extremities irradiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 14.2 Antiemetic medications [1–10]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antiemetic agent</th>
<th>Efficacy/indications</th>
<th>Route, frequency, and dose</th>
<th>Adverse effects/limitations to Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serotonin (5-HT&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;) receptor antagonists</strong></td>
<td>Most effective antiemetics for acute CINV; well-established efficacy for radiation-induced emesis; reduced efficacy for delayed nausea and vomiting. Efficacy enhanced by combination with steroids for prevention of acute CINV. Most pediatric experience with ondansetron and granisetron. For prevention of acute emesis, equivalent doses have equivalent safety and efficacy; may be used interchangeably.</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing (Ondansetron also available as oral dissolving tablet (ODT)). Ondansetron 0.15 mg/kg every 8 h (maximum of 8 mg/dose) or 0.45 mg/kg (maximum of 32 mg IV or 24 mg PO) once daily. Granisetron 10–20 mcg/kg every 12 h (maximum of 1 mg/dose) or 20–40 mcg/kg (maximum of 2 mg) once daily. Dolasetron 1.8 mg/kg (maximum of 100 mg/dose) as a single dose pre-chemo. Administer 30 min prior to chemo if IV and 1 h prior if oral. Emerging data suggest that oral route is as efficacious as IV route.</td>
<td>Low incidence of side effects; generally well tolerated. Most common: headache, constipation, drowsiness. Transient elevated liver enzymes (asymptomatic). Tachycardia, bradycardia, hypotension reported with ondansetron. Electrocardiographic (ECG) abnormalities, although do not appear to be of clinical significance. Dolasetron IV contraindicated secondary to risk of abnormal heart rhythm (torsade de pointes)&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondansetron</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granisetron</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolasetron (available in Canada)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropisetron and palonosetron are not on market in Canada (further pediatric research required)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corticosteroids</strong></td>
<td>Mechanism unknown. Synergistic activity with 5-HT&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt; antagonists and metoclopramide (20% increase in efficacy for acute CINV)&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;. More effective for delayed symptoms than 5-HT&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt; antagonists. Also effective for radiation-induced emesis.</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing. No clear dose guidelines for children. Dexamethasone: Low dose: 2.5–3 mg/m&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; (maximum of 4 mg/dose) every 12 h. High dose: 4.5–8 mg/m&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;dose (maximum of 8 mg/dose) every 8–12 h. May substitute with methylprednisolone (ratio 5:1 with dexamethasone).</td>
<td>Routine use discouraged in leukemia, lymphoma, brain tumor patients (may reduce delivery of chemotherapy to brain tumors by repairing the blood–brain barrier). Most common: insomnia, hearthburn and agitation; also hyperglycemia, increased appetite, mood and behavioral disturbances reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexamethasone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Methylprednisolone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiemetic agent</td>
<td>Efficacy/indications</td>
<td>Route, frequency, and dose</td>
<td>Adverse effects/limitations to Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dopamine Antagonist</td>
<td>Efficacy with moderately emetogenic regimens</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing</td>
<td>Risk of acute dystonic reactions in children and extrapyramidal symptoms (administer with diphenhydramine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metoclopramide</td>
<td>Efficacy in delayed nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>1–2 mg/kg/dose every 2–4 h if needed (prn)</td>
<td>Sedation, dry mouth, diarrhea, hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior to 5-HT₃ antagonists for radiation-induced emesis</td>
<td>Delayed CINV: 0.1–0.2 mg/kg/dose every 6 h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiemetic agent</td>
<td>Efficacy/indications</td>
<td>Route, frequency, and dose</td>
<td>Adverse effects/limitations to Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenothiazines</td>
<td>Most effective against mild to moderately emetogenic treatments</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing</td>
<td>Use limited by side effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prochlorperazine</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prochlorperazine</td>
<td>Extrapyramidal symptoms, dystonic reactions in children (administer with diphenhydramine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promethazine</td>
<td>Used for breakthrough nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>Promethazine</td>
<td>High incidence of orthostatic hypotension, sedation, restlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.25–1 mg/kg every 4–6 h (maximum of 25/dose)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepines</td>
<td>Adjuncts to conventional antiemetics for breakthrough and refractory nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing</td>
<td>Sedation, drowsiness, motor incoordination, amnesia, respiratory depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorazepam</td>
<td>Effective for anticipatory nausea, vomiting</td>
<td>0.025–0.05 mg/kg (maximum of 2 mg/dose) every 6–12 h as needed (prn)</td>
<td>Caution with additive sedation and respiratory depression with other antiemetics and narcotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antihistamines</td>
<td>Mild antiemetic properties</td>
<td>Oral and intravenous dosing</td>
<td>Drowsiness, sedation, dry mouth, hypotension, palpitations, tachycardia, urinary retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimenhydrinate</td>
<td>Used in combination with other antiemetics to potentiate effectiveness in refractory mild to moderate nausea</td>
<td>1 mg/kg/dose/dose every 4–6 h as needed (prn)</td>
<td>May increase CNS depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphenhydramine</td>
<td>Used with dopamine antagonists to prevent extrapyramidal reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiemetic Agent</td>
<td>Efficacy/Indications</td>
<td>Route, Frequency, and Dose</td>
<td>Adverse Effects/Limitations to Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cannabinoids</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabilone</td>
<td>Derivatives of marijuana</td>
<td>Oral only</td>
<td>Twice daily dosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exact mechanism unknown; weak to modest antiemetic efficacy; superior to metoclopramide, prochlorperazine, and domperidone</td>
<td>&lt; 12 years of age:</td>
<td>Use limited by adverse effect profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective in management of anticipatory nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>&lt;18 kg – 0.5 mg</td>
<td>Drowsiness, dysphoria, dizziness, mood alteration, hypotension, tachycardia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particularly effective in adolescents and young adults refractory to standard antiemetic therapy</td>
<td>&gt;18 kg – 1 mg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≥12 year of age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1–2 mg/dose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Start the night before chemotherapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neurokinin-1 (NK-1) receptor antagonist</strong></td>
<td>Effective in preventing cisplatin-induced nausea and vomiting in conjunction with 5-HT\textsubscript{3} antagonist and steroid; increased control of acute nausea by 10–15% and delayed nausea by 20–30%</td>
<td>Oral only</td>
<td>Potentially significant drug interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aprepitant</td>
<td>Insufficient data on pharmacokinetics, efficacy, and safety in young children</td>
<td>In patients &gt;40 kg and ≥12 years, 125 mg x 1 on day of most highly emetogenic chemotherapy, then 80 mg daily on subsequent 2 days</td>
<td>Do not give the following drugs concurrently or for 2 weeks after aprepitant:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Optimal effective pediatric dose in young children unknown</td>
<td>Etoposide, ifosfamide, imatinib, irinotecan, vincristine, vinblastine, vinorelbine, phenytoin, carbamazepine, paclitaxel, phenobarbital, warfarin, benzodiazepines, clarithromycin, rifampin, oral contraceptives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Reduce corticosteroids by 25% if IV or 50% if oral while on aprepitant</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*IV intravenous
secondary to their underlying disease and exposure to corticosteroids or high-intensity chemotherapy regimens. There is still a high mortality rate (24%) associated with PCP despite early diagnosis and appropriate treatment with high-dose trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX) [11]. Therefore, it is crucial that prophylaxis against PCP should begin at the initiation of chemotherapy and continue for at least three months following discontinuation of immnosuppressive therapy [4]. TMP-SMX is the best choice for PCP prophylaxis because of its safety profile, proven efficacy in children with cancer, and relative ease of administration. For patients 1–2 months of age, those allergic to TMP-SMX, with G-6PD deficiency, or experiencing excessive myelosuppression with TMP-SMX, alternative prophylaxis with dapsone, aerosolized or intravenous pentamidine, or atovaquone may be considered. No alternative regimen is as effective as TMP-SMX (Table 14.3).

**Antifungal Prophylaxis in Pediatric Oncology Patients**

Invasive fungal infections are a major cause of infection-related morbidity and mortality in pediatric oncology patients. Risk of these infections is related to intensity of chemotherapy regimens and duration of neutropenia [18, 19]. Other established risk factors for fungal infections in this patient population include the presence of indwelling central venous access devices, use of broad-spectrum antibiotics, corticosteroids, fungal colonization, and chemotherapy-induced mucositis [19, 20]. Patients with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) are at particularly high risk of invasive fungal infections. The predominant fungal pathogens in North America and Europe are *Candida* and *Aspergillus* species [2, 18]. Systemic antifungal prophylaxis has been shown to reduce morbidity and fungal-related mortality in severely neutropenic chemotherapy patients. Evidence for benefit is greatest for those with a >15% rate of systemic fungal infection, prolonged neutropenia, and stem cell transplant (SCT) recipients [4].

Most prophylactic regimens are aimed at reducing invasive infections caused by *Candida* sp. Topical agents (i.e., nystatin) have been widely used for prevention of mucosal candidiasis but effectiveness in preventing invasive fungal infections is controversial. Therefore, nystatin and clotrimazole troches are not recommended for fungal prophylaxis in high-risk patients [4]. Fluconazole, a systemically active antifungal triazole, is the most frequently studied prophylactic drug and is significantly better than nystatin at preventing invasive fungal infection. Table 14.4 summarizes antifungal agents for prophylaxis. The choice of prophylactic regimen should be made in consultation with specific institutional infection profiles and infectious disease guidelines.

There is concern that long-term use of prophylaxis may induce resistance to antifungal drugs and shift the colonization pattern of fungal organisms toward more resistant fungi. Susceptible fungi may be eradicated, permitting overgrowth of more resistant species (i.e., *Candida glabrata, Candida krusei, Candida parapsilosis, Aspergillus*). This has not yet been observed in clinical practice [19].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Efficacy</th>
<th>Dosing for PCP prophylaxis</th>
<th>Side effects/precautions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole</strong></td>
<td><strong>Drug of choice (first-line agent)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.5 mg TMP component/kg/dose orally twice a day given 3 days per week (75 mg TMP component/m² dose)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bone marrow suppression (neutropenia, thrombocytopenia)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(cotrimoxazole, TMP-SMX)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highly effective in preventing PCP</strong></td>
<td><strong>91−100% reported reduction in occurrence of PCP</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mild cutaneous rash, pruritus, fever, Gastrointestinal upset (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>&lt;10% breakthrough infection rate with compliant patients</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maximum of 160 mg of TMP component per dose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hyperkalemia ↑ Photosensitivity Transaminase elevation Stevens–Johnson syndrome (rare)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dapsone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recommended second-line agent for patients unable to tolerate TMP-SMX</strong></td>
<td><strong>10−15% breakthrough rate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rash, fever Hepatic dysfunction Gastrointestinal upset Methemoglobinemia (cyanosis, headaches, dizziness, fatigue, weakness)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preferred in patients &lt;2 months old because of liver prematurity</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 mg/kg/day orally (or 5−10 mg/kg/week divided 3 days per week)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hemolytic anemia (dose-related hemolysis) Contraindicated in patients with G6PD deficiency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aerosolized (inhaled) pentamidine</strong></td>
<td><strong>Breakthrough PCP rates 5−25%</strong></td>
<td><strong>≥5 years: 300 mg monthly</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bronchospasm, cough, wheezing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>One study reported 2.7% breakthrough rate</strong></td>
<td><strong>&lt;5 years: 8 mg/kg monthly (maximum 300 mg per dose)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited to children old enough to use the nebulizer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intravenous pentamidine</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited evaluation in pediatric oncology patients</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 mg/kg/dose IV every 2 to 4 weeks Administered over 1−2 h; RN monitoring required during infusion for adverse effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hypoglycemia and hypotension during rapid infusion Hypercalcemia, hyperkalemia, hypoglycemia Hypotension Nephrotoxicity Pancreatitis Dyssrhythmias Transaminase elevations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atovaquone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited evaluation in pediatric oncology patients</strong></td>
<td><strong>1−3 months: 30 mg/kg/day 4−24 months: 45 mg/kg/day &gt;24 months: 30 mg/kg/day As a single daily dose (maximum of 1,500 mg/dose)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Favorable side effect profile (less toxic than dapsone) Most common side effect is mild upper gastrointestinal symptoms Fever, rash, transaminase elevation reported</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14.4 Antifungal agents for prophylaxis [2, 4, 18–21]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Spectrum</th>
<th>Efficacy</th>
<th>Prophylactic dosing</th>
<th>Side effects/precautions/drug interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluconazole</td>
<td>• Active against <em>Candida</em></td>
<td>Effectively controls colonization; reduces mucosal infections and invasive disease; reduces all-cause mortality</td>
<td>5 mg/kg/day orally or intravenously (maximum of 400 mg/day)</td>
<td>Variable resistance with <em>C. glabrata</em>; <em>C. Krusei</em> always resistant; Side effects include nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, pruritus and rash, increased liver enzymes, and increased BUN and creatinine; Drug–drug interactions common (inhibitor of CYP P450 isoenzymes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active against dimorphic fungi (e.g., histoplasmosis, coccidioidomycosis) and <em>C. neoformans</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inactive against molds (e.g., <em>Aspergillus</em>, Zygomycetes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fluconazole</em> is recommended first-line agent in pediatrics³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Itraconazole</strong></td>
<td>Reduced invasive fungal infections and <em>Candida</em> infections better than fluconazole</td>
<td>In children &gt;5 years of age 2.5 mg/kg twice a day orally (maximum of 200 mg/dose)</td>
<td>Adverse gastrointestinal effects limit use; Contraindicated in patients with significant cardiac systolic dysfunction; Drug–drug interactions common (inhibitor of CYP P450 isoenzymes); Serum concentration monitoring recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active against <em>Candida</em> and <em>Aspergillus</em> sp.</td>
<td>Comparable effect on all-cause mortality vs. fluconazole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active against dimorphic fungi and <em>C. neoformans</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Itraconazole</em> is not comparable to fluconazole; comparative effect on invasive aspergillosis vs. fluconazole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Voriconazole</strong></td>
<td>No studies for prophylaxis</td>
<td>&lt;20 kg: 50 mg IV/per os twice daily</td>
<td>Caution with IV form in patients with significant renal dysfunction; may worsen azotemia; Serious hepatic reactions (i.e., hepatitis, cholestasis) – monitor transaminases and bilirubin closely; Drug–drug interactions common (inhibitor of CYP P450 isoenzymes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active against <em>Candida</em> and <em>Aspergillus</em> sp.</td>
<td>Standard of care as primary therapy for invasive aspergillosis</td>
<td>≥20 kg: 100 mg IV/per os twice daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active against dimorphic fungi and <em>C. neoformans</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor activity vs. <em>Zygomycetes</em></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Fluconazole is recommended first-line agent for prophylaxis in pediatrics.
| **Posaconazole** | *• Active against Candida, Aspergillus sp., and some Zygomycetes sp.*  
*• Active against dimorphic fungi and C. neoformans* | Effective prophylaxis in neutropenic MDS, AML, and HSCT recipients with significant GVHD (adult) but efficacy in pediatrics not established | 200 mg three times daily orally (≥13 years of age) | No pediatric dosing information available for prophylaxis (safety not established)  
Should be administered with a full meal or liquid nutritional supplement  
Substantial infusional and renal toxicity, although this is reduced with lipid formulations  
Hypokalemia common  
Requires frequent monitoring of renal function, electrolytes and hepatic function  
Lipid formulations very expensive  
Excellent safety profile |
| **Amphotericin B formulations** | *Broad spectrum of antifungal activity versus Candida, Aspergillus sp., Zygomycetes, rarer molds, C. neoformans, and dimorphic fungi* | Insufficient data for prophylactic efficacy in pediatrics | No standardized pediatric dosing information for prophylaxis  
IV administration required  
Hypokalemia common  
Requires frequent monitoring of renal function, electrolytes and hepatic function  
Lipid formulations very expensive | |
| **Caspofungin, Micafungin, Anidulafungin** (echinocandins) | *Active against Candida and Aspergillus sp.*  
*Not reliable or effective against other fungal pathogens* | Caspofungin, anidulafungin insufficient data for prophylactic efficacy in pediatrics  
Micafungin shows superior efficacy compared to fluconazole as prophylaxis during neutropenia in HSCT recipients | In adults, 50 mg/day IV for prophylaxis  
No standardized pediatric dosing information for prophylaxis | |

*MDS* myelodysplastic syndrome, *AML* acute myelogenous leukemia, *HSCT* hematopoietic stem cell transplant, *GVHD* graft versus host disease

*Amphotericin B formulations include: amphotericin B desoxycholate, liposomal amphotericin B (Ambisome®), amphotericin B lipid complex, and amphotericin B colloidal dispersion*
Electrolyte Replacement

Children with malignancies can develop electrolyte imbalances due to the disease process or as a consequence of the associated therapy. Routine laboratory evaluations are necessary at the time of diagnosis and throughout treatment. Administration of oral or intravenous supplements may be needed to maintain normal electrolyte requirements. However, management of electrolytes is challenging during cancer therapy because of frequent changes in a patient’s clinical condition and administration of multiple medications and fluids.

Routine oral magnesium supplementation is recommended with cisplatin-containing regimens, starting at a minimum of 6 mg (0.5 mEq) elemental magnesium/kg/day in divided doses [4]. For treatment of existing hypomagnesemia, use oral therapy of 20–40 mg elemental magnesium/kg/day in divided doses or intravenous therapy of 5–10 mg elemental magnesium/kg/dose (up to maximum of 250 mg elemental magnesium per IV dose) [10]. Some patients may require a continuous infusion of magnesium at a rate of 0.12 mmol magnesium/kg/day intravenously [10]. Use magnesium with caution in renal failure, and large doses may cause diarrhea (Table 14.5).

Granulocyte Colony-Stimulating Factor (G-CSF)

Hematopoietic growth-stimulating factors regulate the proliferation, differentiation, and function of hematopoietic cells [23]. Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF, filgrastim) and granulocyte–macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF, sargramostim) have been effective in reducing the incidence of febrile neutropenia when initiated after chemotherapy or in bone marrow transplant patients [23]. G-CSF regulates the production of the neutrophil lineage, while GM-CSF stimulates the growth of granulocyte, macrophage, and eosinophil colonies [23]. The administration of both factors results in an increase of circulating neutrophils, thus decreasing the number and duration of febrile neutropenic episodes in both adults and children [24]. There is sufficient evidence that primary prophylaxis with colony-stimulating factors (CSFs) significantly reduces the relative risk of severe neutropenia, febrile neutropenia, and infection. There is insufficient evidence that CSFs reduce the number of patients requiring intravenous antibiotics, lower infection-related morbidity, or improve overall survival [25]. The available data also shows no difference in quality of life between placebo and CSF [25]. Further trials are required to compare the clinical activity, toxicity, and cost-effectiveness of G-CSF versus GM-CSF.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electrolyte Imbalance</th>
<th>Etiology in Oncology Patients</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypercalcemia</td>
<td>Bone malignancies and metastases, poor dietary intake of phosphate, renal absorption or excretion, diuretics</td>
<td>GI (anorexia, nausea, vomiting, constipation, ileus)</td>
<td>Hydration + diuretics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neuromuscular (lethargy, apathy, depression, fatigue, hypotonia, stupor, coma)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiovascular (bradycardia, arrhythmia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Renal (polyuria, nocturia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocalcemia</td>
<td>Reduced intake, vitamin D deficiency, intake or malabsorption; hypoparathyroidism, pancreatitis, cisplatin-induced renal tubular damage, tumor lysis syndrome</td>
<td>Neuromuscular irritability, weakness, cramping, fatigue, change in level of consciousness, seizures, ECG changes</td>
<td>Intravenous or oral calcium supplements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperkalemia</td>
<td>Renal failure, cellular breakdown (tumor lysis syndrome), leukocytosis, metabolic acidosis</td>
<td>ECG changes</td>
<td>Kayexalate (sodium polystyrene sulfonate 1 g/kg with 50% sorbitol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insulin (0.1 units/kg) + 25% dextrose (2 mL/kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sodium bicarbonate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calcium gluconate (100–200 mg/kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypokalemia</td>
<td>Decreased intake, increased renal excretion, therapy-induced renal tubular defects (i.e., ifosfamide, cisplatin), diarrhea, vomiting, amphotericin formulations</td>
<td>Skeletal muscle weakness, dysrhythmias, prolonged QT interval, flattened T waves</td>
<td>Intravenous or oral potassium supplements 2–5 mmol/kg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potassium oral or IV in divided doses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electrolyte imbalance</th>
<th>Etiology in oncology patients</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyponatremia</td>
<td>SIADH, ectopic secretion of antidiuretic hormone; renal, adrenal, cortical or cardiac insufficiency; excessive loss secondary to vomiting, diarrhea, nephropathy from ifosfamide, cyclophosphamide, or vinca alkaloids</td>
<td>Convulsions, shock, lethargy, confusion, muscle cramping</td>
<td>Fluid restriction Replace sodium losses Correct underlying causes To correct acute, serious hyponatremia: mmol sodium – desired sodium (mmol/L) – actual sodium (mmol/L) times 0.6 times weight (kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypomagnesemia</td>
<td>Nephrototoxic agents (i.e., cisplatin-induced renal tubular damage, decreased intake, diarrhea, vomiting, urinary loss)</td>
<td>Tetany, seizures, tremors, anorexia, nausea, cardiac abnormalities, weakness, clonus</td>
<td>Intravenous or oral magnesium supplements 1 mEq = 12 mg = 0.5 mMol (refer to paragraph below table)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypermagnesemia</td>
<td>Renal dysfunction</td>
<td>Hyporeflexia, respiratory depression, confusion, coma</td>
<td>Intravenous administration of calcium, diuresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypophosphatemia</td>
<td>Poor dietary intake, malabsorption, excessive renal excretion, vitamin D deficiency, renal tubular damage from ifosfamide</td>
<td>Irritability, paresthesias</td>
<td>Intravenous or oral phosphate supplements Moderate (oral phosphate): 1–2 mmol/kg/day ÷ bid–qid Moderate–severe (IV phosphate therapy): 1–2 mmol/kg/day or 0.042–0.053 mmol/kg/hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperphosphatemia</td>
<td>Chemotherapy, renal insufficiency, glomerular filtration rate &lt; 25% normal, tumor lysis syndrome</td>
<td>Symptoms same as with hypocalcemia</td>
<td>Restrict intake, phosphate binders (e.g., aluminum hydroxide), calcium supplements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIADH syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone secretion
Recommendations for Use of CSFs in Pediatric Oncology Patients

Children with severe neutropenia (a reduction in the number of neutrophils that fight infection) are at risk of life-threatening infections (bacterial, fungal, and viral). The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) has published evidence-based clinical practice guidelines for the use of CSFs with the following recommendations for the pediatric population [25]:

1. The use of G-CSF in pediatric patients is usually guided by clinical protocols.
2. As in adults, the use of G-CSF is reasonable for the primary prophylaxis (to prevent myelosuppression) in patients at high risk of febrile neutropenia based on age, medical history, disease characteristics, and myelotoxicity of chemotherapy regimen.
3. Use of G-CSF for secondary prophylaxis (to prevent new episodes of myelosuppression in patients who experienced a neutropenic complication from a prior cycle of chemotherapy) should be limited to high-risk patients in which a reduced dose of chemotherapy or a delay may compromise survival or treatment outcome.
4. CSFs should not be routinely used as adjunctive treatment with antibiotic therapy for patients with fever and neutropenia but may be considered for patients at high risk for infection-related complications (e.g., expected prolonged neutropenia >10 days, uncontrolled primary disease, pneumonia, hypotension, multiorgan dysfunction, bacterial sepsis, invasive fungal infection).
5. In children with ALL (acute lymphoblastic leukemia), there is a potential risk for secondary myeloid leukemia or myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) associated with G-CSF; therefore, prophylactic use of G-CSF is not recommended for patients with leukemia.

Dosing and Administration of CSFs

There is a theoretical risk that if CSFs are given concurrently with chemotherapy, they may induce progenitor cell cycling and cause increased myelotoxicity [1]. Therefore, it is recommended that G-CSF administration should begin 24–72 h after the administration of myelotoxic chemotherapy and continue through the period of granulocyte nadir until reaching an absolute neutrophil count (ANC) of at least 2–3 × 10^9/L [25]. The recommended dose of G-CSF is 5 mcg/kg/day, and the preferred route of administration is subcutaneous, although it can be administered intravenously. The recommended dose for GM-CSF is 250 mcg/m²/day.
**Side Effects of CSFs**

The predominant side effect reported with G-CSF is medullary bone pain (in 15–39% of patients) [2] which presents shortly after the injection or during the time of neutrophil recovery. This pain can be relieved by analgesics such as acetaminophen or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen). Splenomegaly has been reported but is usually asymptomatic. Other infrequently reported adverse reactions include vasculitis, osteopenia, glomerulonephritis, rash, bone marrow fibrosis, anaphylaxis, and acute febrile neutropenic dermatosis (Sweet’s syndrome). Worsening thrombocytopenia has also been observed with CSF administration in children [2].

Side effects are reported more frequently with GM-CSF and include fever, chills, lethargy, myalgia, bone pain, anorexia, generalized skin eruptions, weight changes, and flushing.

**Menses Suppression (Therapeutic Amenorrhea)**

Reproductive age female patients with thrombocytopenia are at increased risk of menorrhagia which can lead to significant blood loss requiring blood transfusions. Multiple transfusions put patients at risk for complications such as febrile non-hemolytic reactions, viral or bacterial infection, acute hemolytic reaction, anaphylactic reactions, volume and iron overload, etc. Thrombocytopenia may be disease-related (i.e., secondary to leukemia, myelodysplastic syndrome, aplastic anemia) or treatment induced by chemotherapy, radiation, or bone marrow transplantation. Therapeutic amenorrhea with pharmacologic agents should be considered in menstruating female cancer patients if they are experiencing or anticipating severe and prolonged thrombocytopenia. There are a number of effective hormonal regimens proposed to achieve therapeutic amenorrhea. The choice of method is dependent upon the patient’s need for contraception and ability to tolerate estrogen-containing medications. Menses suppression is most effective when initiated before chemotherapy, radiation, or bone marrow transplant and prior to the development of thrombocytopenia [26]. Once initiated, suppression of menses should continue until the platelet count is ≥50,000/μL without transfusion support [4]. Table 14.6 summarizes treatment options for therapeutic suppression of menses in patients at risk of thrombocytopenia.

In patients at an increased risk for venous thromboembolism, estrogen-containing methods should not be used. Estrogen-containing contraceptives are also contraindicated in patients with acute hepatotoxicity and liver tumors. Progestin-only oral contraceptives or injectable progestins (Depo-Provera®) are safer options for these patients [26].

A major disadvantage of menstrual suppression is the increase in breakthrough bleeding that occurs during the first few cycles of using a hormonal method.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description and dosage</th>
<th>Contraception provided</th>
<th>Efficacy in ↓ blood loss</th>
<th>Levonorgestrel intrauterine device (IUD)</th>
<th>GnRH-a</th>
<th>Androgen therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combined oral contraceptives (COCs)</td>
<td>Low-dose monophasic, combined oral contraceptive pill; continued use (administration for unlimited time without interruption) required to eliminate menstrual periods (placebo week eliminated)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Induces progressive endometrial atrophy</td>
<td>For extended use, replace patch every week without a patch-free interval</td>
<td>Progestin-releasing IUD Releases 20 mg of levonorgestrel daily; effective for 5 years</td>
<td>Gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonist; delivery methods and dosages vary (intramuscular depot or intravenous injections or intranasally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injectable progestin-only</td>
<td>Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA) 150 mg intramuscular injection every 12 weeks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Induces endometrial atrophy; amenorrhea uncommon in first few months but common with long-term use (55–60% after 1 yr; 90% after 2 yrs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transdermal contraceptive patch</td>
<td>For extended use, replace patch every week without a patch-free interval</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Studies not published but regimens similar to COCs suppress menstruation</td>
<td>Progestin-releasing IUD Releases 20 mg of levonorgestrel daily; effective for 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levonorgestrel intrauterine device (IUD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80–90% decrease in blood loss; ~ 20% of users are amenorrheic by 1 year of use</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GnRH-a</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Requires 2–4 weeks to induce amenorrhea; superior to DMPA in suppressing hypermenorrhea in patients receiving myelosuppressive therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgen therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>In refractory ITP patients, 84% had amenorrhea or oligomenorrhea after 1–2 months treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 14.6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Combined oral contraceptives (COCs)</th>
<th>Injectable progestin-only</th>
<th>Transdermal contraceptive patch</th>
<th>Levonorgestrel intrauterine device (IUD)</th>
<th>GnRH-a</th>
<th>Androgen therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverse effects</td>
<td>Safety of continuous use comparable to conventional COC regimens, although breakthrough bleeding can occur</td>
<td>High incidence of breakthrough bleeding and spotting</td>
<td>Possible incidence of venous thromboembolism (VTE)</td>
<td>Breakthrough bleeding, ovarian cysts, acne</td>
<td>Main effects are severe bone loss (3% over 3 months) and unfavorable lipid profile; menopausal symptoms (i.e., vaginal dryness, hot flushes)</td>
<td>Androgenic effects limit use (i.e., weight gain, acne, asthenia, myalgias, partial hair loss, headaches); hypoestrogenic reactions (i.e., flushing, sweating, vaginal dryness, irritation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrahepatic cholestasis uncommon (idiosyncratic reaction)</td>
<td>Significant loss of bone mineral density with longer duration of use</td>
<td>Heads, local skin irritation (20%), nausea, abdominal pain</td>
<td>Risk of IUD-associated pelvic inflammatory disease during first 20 days post insertion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ Risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) 3–4 fold (highest risk in first year of use)</td>
<td>Possible weight gain</td>
<td>Delayed return to fertility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headache, nausea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place in therapy for pediatric oncology patients</td>
<td>Preferred method by COG as treatment of choice if no concern about estrogen or patient compliance</td>
<td>Second line if estrogen containing COCs are not an option</td>
<td>Alternative to oral COCs in patients who cannot tolerate oral medications or if compliance with COCs is a concern</td>
<td>Not usually considered for neutropenic or immunosuppressed patients because of infection risk. Literature on IUD usage in immunosuppressed women is extremely limited</td>
<td>Not practical for acute effect given the 2–4 week delay in amenorrhea; best suited for perimenopausal women for short time frame</td>
<td>Not first line because of androgenic side effects</td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance compromised by nausea, emesis, mucositis, or elevated bilirubin related to chemotherapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Okay for use with liver tumors, hepatotoxicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>Slightly more expensive than COCs</td>
<td>Initial high cost; cost-effective with extended use</td>
<td>Very expensive</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Alesse-28®</td>
<td>Depo-Provera®</td>
<td>Ortho Evra®</td>
<td>Mirena®</td>
<td>Leuprolide acetate (Lupron Depot®)</td>
<td>Danazol®</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*COCs* combination oral contraceptives, *COG* Children’s Oncology Group
For example, breakthrough bleeding is common after the initial dose of depomedroxyprogesterone acetate, and this can be managed by reducing the dosing interval to every 2 months or supplementing with a high-dose estrogen COC for 1–3 months. However, the high-dose estrogen will lead to endometrial growth, and once the estrogen therapy is stopped, the patient is at risk of an estrogen withdrawal bleed. Consultation with a gynecologist is recommended prior to initiating therapeutic amenorrhea or when problematic bleeding occurs (Table 14.6).

References

Chapter 15
Abdominal Complications

Hanna Tseitlin

Keywords Antibiotic coverage • Asparaginase • Bowel ischemia • Constipation • Enemas • Fecal loading • Hematochezia • Mucosal injury • Neutropenic enterocolitis • Pancreatitis • Peritonitis • Pneumatosis intestinalis • Typhlitis

Introduction

The gastrointestinal system is often a target of toxicity of chemotherapy due to its natural pattern of rapid cell division. Different treatment modalities such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery as well as underlying disease processes are known to alter the mucosal surface and lead to life-threatening complications. Mucosal injury and destruction increase permeability of the mucosal barrier and lead to edema, inflammation, and bacterial invasion. Consequently, it may trigger intestinal perforation, peritonitis, sepsis, and death.

The most common gastrointestinal complications in children undergoing chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments are constipation, typhlitis, pneumatosis, and pancreatitis. Some of the clinical symptoms overlap and make the differential diagnosis difficult (Table 15.1).
Constipation

Definition

Constipation is often difficult to define due to its subjective symptomatology and dependence on an individual’s elimination habits. The signs of constipation may include abdominal fullness, bloating, hard stools, abdominal cramping, and difficulty defecating.

Causes of constipation, as with other gastrointestinal complications, are often multifactorial in children undergoing treatment for malignant diseases. It may be related to lack of mobility, dietary choices, dehydration due to fluid loss, and bowel obstruction due to disease process. The administration of some chemotherapeutic agents, such as vincristine, or medications such as antiemetics and opiates may also result in constipation.

Despite complexities in its definition and the subjective nature of bowel elimination habits, there are guidelines that define acceptable elimination patterns for children of different ages. Younger children usually have more frequent bowel movements; however, as they get older, the frequency decreases and does not change after the age of 4 years. Children 4 years of age or older should have anywhere between 3 and 14 bowel movements per week.

Some of the subjective signs associated with constipation are general irritability and abdominal cramps that are often described by children as abdominal pain and decreased oral intake. Other signs may include vomiting and abdominal distention [1]. Changes in personal elimination habits related to frequency and quantity of stool should be taken into account when establishing the diagnosis of constipation [2].

Prevalence and Diagnosis

Prevalence of constipation in healthy children has been reported anywhere between 2% and 10%; however, in children undergoing chemotherapy treatment, the prevalence has been reported to be as high as 50–100% [2–4].

The diagnosis of constipation is primarily based on medical history and physical examination although some radiological investigations could be useful. Plain X-ray can easily identify fecal loading, having been shown to have a detection sensitivity of 92% and specificity of 62% [1]. Since children undergoing chemotherapy treatment have an increased risk for developing gastrointestinal complications with similar presentations, the diagnosis of constipation is often based on exclusion of other conditions.
The key to managing constipation in children undergoing chemotherapy treatment is prevention. Therefore, bowel regimens should be introduced soon after starting chemotherapy protocols, as outlined in Fig. 15.1. Prior to initiating treatment for constipation, a thorough physical examination should be administered and blood counts assessed. Enemas and suppositories are contraindicated in children undergoing chemotherapy due to risk of infection and perforation, especially in the presence of neutropenia. Exception could be made with those children who are not neutropenic at the time of assessment for constipation.

**Definition of Typhlitis**

Typhlitis, also referred to as neutropenic enterocolitis, is a constellation of symptoms often observed in patients undergoing chemotherapy treatments. The symptoms include abdominal pain, fever, abdominal distention, and diminished bowel sounds. Neutropenia is the most common laboratory finding for the majority of patients.

It was first described in 1970 and was initially attributed to the complication of childhood leukemia. It was subsequently recognized as a potentially life-threatening complication in children and adults undergoing treatments for both hematological and solid malignancies as well as in patients with AIDS, aplastic anemia, MDS, and those undergoing bone marrow transplant [5–7].
Typhlitis is defined as the inflammatory process of the cecum; however, it may also involve terminal ileum and ascending colon. It is described as bowel wall thickening with inflammation, edema, and mucosal ulceration and necrosis [8–10]. The etiology of typhlitis is not clearly defined. Believed to be multifactorial, it entails mucosal destruction and injury that leads to a loss of barrier in face of gastrointestinal microorganisms, neutropenia that supports microbial invasion, as well as intramural hemorrhages related to thrombocytopenia and subsequent inflammation, edema, and necrosis [10, 11].

Prevalence and Diagnosis

The incidence of typhlitis in children undergoing chemotherapy treatment for either leukemia/lymphoma or solid tumors has been reported to be 3 and 2.5%, respectively [6, 11]. The diagnostic workup should include a thorough medical history, physical examination, laboratory workup, and radiological investigations.

History findings may include complaints of abdominal pain, fever, diarrhea, and vomiting. Constipation is present in about 6% of patients, and hematochezia has been reported in about 25% of the patients. Physical findings often include abdominal tenderness on palpation, localized to the right lower quadrant, and abdominal distention [12]. In view of the fact that typhlitis is often referred to as neutropenic enterocolitis, the most common laboratory finding associated with typhlitis is neutropenia, defined as neutrophil count of less than 500 cells/μL. Other laboratory findings may include anemia and thrombocytopenia and electrolyte disturbances such as hypokalemia, hypophosphatemia, and hypoalbuminemia. Blood cultures
are positive in about 25% of cases with *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas* species, *Klebsiella* species, and viridans group streptococci.

Radiological findings may include bowel wall thickening, accumulation of paracolonic fluid, free air, and pneumatosis intestinalis [7, 12].

**Management**

The management of typhlitis is based on supportive medical measures, with surgical interventions reserved for severe cases with a presence of perforation, sepsis, peritonitis, gangrenous bowel, and persistent gastrointestinal hemorrhage. Supportive medical measures include bowel rest, nutritional support with TPN, antimicrobials, and nasogastric suctioning [8, 11, 12] (Table 15.2).

**Definition of Pneumatosis Intestinalis**

Pneumatosis intestinalis (PI) is defined as air within the bowel wall and is most commonly present in premature infants as a sign of bowel ischemia. Its occurrence decreases in children older than 1 year of age and is rarely observed in adults. Children undergoing chemotherapy treatment face an increased risk of developing PI as a result of destruction of bowel mucosa and increased permeability of the gut. The etiology of PI is unknown; however, several hypotheses have been proposed to include mucosal injury and increased permeability with gas diffusion from the bowel lumen into the bowel wall, bacterial invasion with intramural gas production, and increased intraluminal pressure facilitating gas diffusion. PI typically occurs in the colon, most commonly in the ascending and transverse segments; however, in some cases, it has also been reported in the terminal ileum [13, 14]. Approximately 5–10% of patients with PI could be asymptomatic and are diagnosed incidentally on plain abdominal radiographs when investigating for other conditions. When symptomatic, children often present with abdominal pain, abdominal distention, vomiting, and constipation; fever and neutropenia are often

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**Table 15.2  Nonsurgical management of typhlitis**

*Non surgical management of typhlitis:*

- Bowel rest – NPO until symptoms’ resolution
- Total parenteral nutrition support
- Fluid resuscitation
- Broad-spectrum antibiotic coverage as per institutional febrile/neutropenia guidelines
- Adjust antibiotic coverage based on sensitivity in the presence of positive cultures
- Nasogastric suctioning
- Correction of electrolyte abnormalities
- Continuous narcotics infusion for severe abdominal pain
found at the time of presentation. A more severe presentation of PI has been attributed to perforation resulting in pneumoperitoneum, peritonitis, and sepsis [13, 14].

**Prevalence and Diagnosis**

Intensive chemotherapy protocols such as treatments for acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and use of steroids for the induction of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) have been strongly associated with incidents of PI in the pediatric oncology population. Chemotherapeutic agents such as vincristine, asparaginase, methotrexate, and cytarabine have been implicated as possible causes when received 30 days prior to development of PI. Since these agents are most commonly used for treatment of ALL and AML, the prevalence rate of PI in that population is 4–5% [14].

Plain abdominal radiographs are adequate for identifying PI in majority of children and are sufficient for making a diagnosis. In cases where the results of plain X-ray cannot definitively confirm the presence of PI, abdominal CT should be utilized to confirm the diagnosis. Since abdominal ultrasounds identify only 20% of PI cases, they should not be used for diagnostic purposes [14, 15].

**Management**

As with typhlitis, conservative medical management should be implemented in the absence of peritonitis and sepsis (Table 15.3).

**Definition of Pancreatitis**

Pancreatitis is defined as an inflammatory process of the pancreas and is often described in association with asparaginase treatment for ALL in pediatric oncology patients. Other chemotherapy agents that have been associated with acute pancreatitis are ifosfamide, 6-mercaptopurine, and vinca alkaloids; however, those cases are
Since leukemia is the most common malignancy in childhood, and asparaginase is an important component of the leukemic protocol, asparaginase-associated acute pancreatitis should be examined in this part.

### Prevalence and Diagnosis

The prevalence of acute pancreatitis has been reported to be between 2 and 18% in children undergoing treatment for ALL. This wide variation in incidence has been related to the difference in administration protocols and asparaginase preparation [17–19]. Children older than 10 years of age at the time of ALL diagnosis have twofold higher incidence of pancreatitis when compared to younger children [18].

The diagnosis of pancreatitis is based on clinical symptoms and laboratory abnormalities, as well as radiological findings. Abdominal pain has been identified as the key clinical feature with 100% of patients exhibiting the symptom. Irritability, nausea, and vomiting have been reported in about 75% of cases [20]. Some patients may have a concurrent febrile neutropenic episode; however, it is usually unrelated to the diagnosis of acute pancreatitis.

Abdominal ultrasound is the most commonly used modality for confirming a clinically suspicious case of acute pancreatitis. However, it must be noted that in some children evaluated with abdominal ultrasound, acute pancreatitis is not always detected despite the presence of clinical and laboratory findings. Abdominal CT should be reserved for children exhibiting worsening or persistence of symptoms. It should also be considered in children that present with the clinical picture of acute pancreatitis and nondiagnostic ultrasound (Table 15.4).

### Management

Pancreatitis is usually managed conservatively, with surgery reserved for managing complications such as pseudocyst.

Antibiotic coverage should only be implemented when concurrent fever and neutropenia are present. Nutritional intake could be introduced with resolution of symptoms and improvement in pancreatic enzymes and should follow a progressive schedule from clear fluids to full diet as tolerated by the child. In the event of
recurrence of symptoms and rebound elevation of pancreatic enzymes while advancing the diet, bowel rest should be reintroduced until new improvement is evident. Subsequent progression of the diet could be initiated as tolerated (Table 15.5).

**Summary**

Gastrointestinal complications in children undergoing chemotherapy treatments are multifactorial and require a systemic approach. Thorough history and physical examination should be obtained in a child presenting with abdominal discomfort. Underlying diagnosis and chemotherapeutic agents should be taken into account when establishing differential diagnosis. A high index of suspicion should be present while examining children with subtle abdominal symptoms, since those could be blunted by neutropenia and steroid administration, masking a gastrointestinal emergency. While conservative treatments are preferred for managing gastrointestinal complications, a surgical team should be consulted to evaluate the need for surgical interventions.

**Case 1  Constipation**

A 14-year-old boy with underlying pelvic Ewing’s sarcoma and neurogenic bladder/bowel complains of severe back pain through clinic visits. He reports regular bowel movements (Fig. 15.2).
Case 2 Typhlitis
A four-and-a-half-year-old girl with underlying history of ALL presents with neutropenia and severe abdominal pain. Abdominal CT shows gas-filled fusiform bowel loops in the left abdomen. A few bubbles are seen below the abdominal wall which are concerning for extraluminal bubbles (Fig. 15.3).

Case 3 Pneumatosis
An almost 5-year-old girl with underlying history of ALL presents with neutropenia and severe abdominal pain. Abdominal X-ray and CT reveal pneumatosis in the ascending colon (Fig. 15.4).

Case 4 Pancreatitis
An almost 6-year-old boy treated with asparaginase for underlying ALL. He presented with decreased oral intake, severe lower abdominal pain, and emesis. Pancreatic enzymes were done: peak amylase was 169 U/L, peak lipase was 1334 U/L.
Abdominal ultrasound revealed a hypoechoic area at the pancreas measuring $9.8 \times 6.7 \times 3.2$ cm, highly suggestive of a pancreatic pseudocyst (Fig. 15.5).

References

Chapter 16
Emergency Radiation Therapy in Pediatric Oncology

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Keywords Abdominal masses • Acute radiation reactions • Hepatomegaly • High-dose dexamethasone • High-energy photons • Hyperfractionated regimens • Inferior vena cava obstruction • Intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) • Mediastinal masses • Musculoskeletal toxicity • Myelopathy • Parallel-opposed technique • Scoliosis • Spinal cord compression • Spinal instability • Superior vena cava syndrome

Introduction

There are few but distinct emergency situations where radiation therapy (RT) is indicated in pediatric oncology. Radiotherapy can provide a highly effective noninvasive option for local and locoregional response, supporting the use of this modality in clinical circumstances where rapid decompression of critical structures is needed and surgery is not warranted.

Principles of Radiation Therapy

High-energy photons have no mass or electrical charge, but as they travel in tissue, they randomly strip electrons from atoms. As water is the commonest molecule in biologic tissues, most of the effects of ionizing radiation are by creating a hydroxy radical by stripping an electron from a water molecule, a highly reactive molecule
which will interact with the DNA of the cell and result in either a single- or double-stranded DNA break. Double-strand breaks may lead to chromosomal aberrations, and eventually to cell death, mainly during mitosis, when the cell attempts to divide. Because most of the cell death caused by radiation occurs when cells attempt to divide, one sees the effects of radiotherapy at various time intervals following radiation exposure, largely governed by the kinetics of the different tissues exposed. This explains why mucosal surface reactions (mucositis of oropharynx, diarrhea with bowel radiation, skin erythema, and hair loss) tend to be acute effects seen within weeks of beginning radiation, whereas subcutaneous fibrosis, growth, and vascular changes tend to be months to years following radiation exposure [1, 2].

Significant technological advances in radiation oncology have been made in the recent decade. Treatment planning now commonly employs 3D computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance (MR), and positron emission tomography (PET) imaging, whereas previously only 2D imaging was available. An optimal dose to target can now be delivered with minimal dose to normal structures using 3D conformal radiation therapy or, when available, intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT). Also, image-guided radiation therapy (IGRT), notably illustrated by the use cone beam CT imaging on treatment units to ensure the accurate positioning of the patient prior to treatment, has tremendously improved the precision of radiation delivery, reducing the margin of error to below 1 mm in many settings.

**Mediastinal Masses**

Mediastinal masses causing superior vena cava syndrome or acute airway compromise are one of the indications for emergency radiation therapy in the pediatric population. This presentation occurs mainly in association with lymphoma, and less commonly with sarcoma and neuroblastoma. Emergency RT for lymphoma patients is only provided when chemotherapy is contraindicated due to severe hemodynamic instability or other organ failure. More often, the first cycle of chemotherapy can produce a rapid response and symptomatic relief.

Details of the differential diagnosis, investigation, and therapy options associated to mediastinal masses in children are presented in Chap. 4. The following text focuses only on the aspects of emergency RT in this context. It is important to note that a biopsy should always be obtained if possible prior to treatment since RT can interfere with histologic diagnosis [3].

**Rationale and Evidence**

For decades, the efficacy of radiation therapy to relieve mediastinal compression secondary to tumor masses has been recognized [4]. Many publications in adult patients with superior vena cava syndrome, mainly secondary to lung cancer, have
repeatedly shown an excellent response rate to emergency irradiation in the order of 75–80% [5–7].

Similar data in the pediatric literature are rare. Bertsch et al. published in 1998 the experience of the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia in terms of urgent therapeutic irradiation in pediatric oncology from 1988 to 1994 [8]. In their cohort of 104 patients, 18 presented with respiratory compromise, the majority (12) due to a mediastinal mass. The response rate to radiotherapy was 72%.

**Technique**

Planning procedures depend on the severity of the respiratory compromise. If the supine position can be tolerated, CT images should be obtained to allow a 3D or IMRT conformal irradiation. If CT planning is impossible, bony landmarks and a clinical markup can be used for a simple parallel-opposed pair technique. However, as soon as the child’s clinical condition allows it, a conformal technique should be used to deliver the remaining treatments. Usually 1.5–2 Gy per fraction to a total dose of 6–7.5 Gy should be adequate to relieve symptoms. Hyperfractionated regimens (1.2–1.5 Gy per fraction twice a day to a total dosage of 10 Gy) are another option [9].

**Expected Side Effects with Recommended Doses/Fractionations**

Expected side effects with the recommended dose and technique are low as detailed in Table 16.1. Since this treatment is often offered in a palliative setting, late effects may not be of substantial clinical concern.

**Case 1**

This 8-year-old boy with recurrent Ewing’s sarcoma presented with a significant progression of a known metastatic mediastinal mass and secondary marked compression of his trachea (Figs. 16.1 and 16.2).

This patient was also known with other extrathoracic metastatic sites. He received palliative radiation therapy to a total dose of 15 Gy in 5 daily fractions using CT planning and a parallel-opposed pair technique (Figs. 16.3 and 16.4).

A CT scan done approximately 2 months after treatment showed tumor regression and restoration of tracheal and right bronchus patency (Figs. 16.5 and 16.6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Side effect</th>
<th>Time of onset</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Kidney</td>
<td>Tumor lysis syndrome</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Associated with large lymphoma tumors</td>
<td>See Chap. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Dryness and skin erythema</td>
<td>Acute effect</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moisturizing cream only is usually sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resolves in 2–3 weeks postirradiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart [22–25]</td>
<td>Increased risk of cardiovascular disease</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Adequate long-term follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyroid gland [26, 27]</td>
<td>Thyroid dysfunction, mainly hypothyroidism</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Screening and treatment according to guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [23, 25, 28]</td>
<td>Increased risk of secondary malignancy</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Adequate long-term follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surveillance according to guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 16.1 Mediastinal mass compressing trachea before treatment

Fig. 16.2 Mediastinal mass compressing trachea before treatment

Fig. 16.3 Radiation therapy using parallel-opposed pair technique
Fig. 16.4  Radiation therapy using parallel-opposed pair technique

Fig. 16.5  Tumor regression and restoration of tracheal and right bronchus patency

Fig. 16.6  Tumor regression and restoration of tracheal and left bronchus patency
Summary

Urgent mediastinal RT in children is often limited to a small dose (6–7.5 Gy) and relieves symptoms in approximately 75% of patients. Obtaining a biopsy is always preferable before treating if the diagnosis has not been previously established. Acute side effects are minor with low doses. Conformal 3D radiation therapy technique or IMRT should always be the preferred modality if possible.

Abdominal Masses

Symptomatic abdominal masses requiring emergency radiation therapy are mostly seen in the context of infants younger than 1 year old with stage IV-S neuroblastoma and extensive metastatic disease of the liver (i.e., Pepper’s syndrome). Marked hepatomegaly can be associated with acute respiratory compromise due to upward pressure on the diaphragm, inferior vena cava obstruction, compromise of renal perfusion, and occasionally gastrointestinal compromise or disseminated intravascular coagulation. In the presence of severe symptomatic hepatomegaly, urgent local abdominal irradiation is indicated, particularly if response to initial chemotherapy has been slow. Less frequently, emergency radiation therapy can also be used to reduce abdominal tumor masses of other histology causing similar severe symptomatology [8]. Details of the differential diagnosis, investigation, and therapy options associated to abdominal masses in children are presented in Chap. 5.

Rationale and Evidence

A few small series describe the role of emergency radiotherapy to palliate abdominal masses. Peschel et al. reported on the high efficacy of radiation therapy for treatment of symptomatic hepatomegaly in three patients with stage IV-S neuroblastoma treated in 1968–1979, and all patients were alive at 2 years after treatment [10]. Blatt et al. reported in 1987 a significant clinical response in seven patients with neuroblastoma and massive hepatomegaly, treated with radiation therapy in 1951–1985 [11]. A modern series by Bertsch et al. [8] reported on the results of urgent abdominal radiation therapy in a heterogeneous group of eight patients treated in 1988–1994 at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. The most frequent histology was neuroblastoma, and the main indication for treatment was gastrointestinal obstruction. The response rate to irradiation in this group was 66%.

In evaluating the clinical response to treatment, it is important to keep in mind that symptomatic improvement without measurable change in liver size can occur
as early as 2 days after completion of radiation therapy, but complete resolution of hepatomegaly may take up to several months to occur [11].

**Technique**

The planning procedure is often limited due to the age of the patient and severe symptomatology, particularly in cases with respiratory compromise. For the radiation planning/treatment of young infants, the assistance of an experienced pediatric anesthetic team is necessary. Depending on the severity of respiratory distress, general anesthesia or only sedation may be indicated. CT-based 3D conformal planning is always preferred for readily available treatment. However, since such cases do not generally require high-precision target delineation, clinical markup based on diagnostic imaging and physical exam is also acceptable in some circumstances to expedite treatment. Treatment is given with a parallel-opposed technique using 6-MV photon beams and appropriate shielding. Depending on the clinical response, a total dose of 2–6 Gy, 1.0–1.5 per fraction, is often sufficient to decrease the abdominal burden of disease [9, 11].

**Expected Side Effects**

Published data on side effects are again based on small series including patients treated with various irradiation techniques and highly variable doses and fractionation schemes [10–12]. In general, acute radiation reactions are minimal with the recommended technique and dose, but prophylactic antiemetic medication administration before treatment avoids the radiation-induced nausea often associated with abdominal irradiation. In terms of late effects, in the series by Blatt et al., at a median follow-up of 8 years, two of the seven irradiated patients had significant late effects. One patient had chondromas in multiple ribs and clinically apparent hypoplasia of the muscles and bones, and the other suffered from radiation nephritis and hepatic fibrosis. However, it was noted by the authors that both patients had been treated before 1970 with radiation doses (>12 Gy) and radiation portals larger than those used in the modern era. Similar findings were described in another series focusing on late toxicity of radiation therapy in 13 neuroblastoma patients with a median follow-up of 23 years. Musculoskeletal toxicity, the most frequent among these patients, was associated with treatment doses exceeding 15 Gy [12]. With the use of lower doses most recently reported, one does not expect to see any liver or renal toxicity and only very minimal late growth effects. There may be a low risk of secondary malignancy in the long term.

**Case 2**

A 4-month-old infant presented with rapidly increasing abdominal girth and increased respiratory rate. CT imaging showed a right suprarenal mass, a left abdominal mass, and massive hepatomegaly (Figs. 16.7 and 16.8).
A diagnosis of neuroblastoma stage IV-S was made, and chemotherapy was started. Unfortunately, the patient’s respiratory status worsened, and he was referred for emergency radiation therapy of his hepatic disease. A clinical markup with a simple parallel-opposed pair technique (AP/PA fields) (Fig. 16.9) was used.

A total dose of 5 Gy in five daily fractions was delivered. The child had significant clinical improvement 3 weeks after treatment. A progressive resolution of his hepatomegaly was observed as demonstrated on CT scan images at 2 months (Figs. 16.10 and 16.11) and 2.5 years (Figs. 16.12 and 16.13) posttreatment. This patient also received chemotherapy after irradiation and also likely contributed to the hepatic disease response.
Fig. 16.8 CT imaging showing a right suprarenal mass, a left abdominal mass, and massive hepatomegaly in a 4-month-old infant with diagnosis of neuroblastoma stage IV-S.

Fig. 16.9 Posterior treatment field.
Summary

Stage IV-S neuroblastoma with hepatomegaly is the most common indication for urgent irradiation in the clinical scenario of an abdominal mass. Excellent results have been reported in the literature using low total doses of 2–6 Gy. Clinical markup is still often used in this particular context. Expected acute and late side effects of this treatment are minimal with the recommended doses.
Spinal Cord Compression

Spinal cord compression secondary to primary or metastatic disease is a common indication for emergency radiation therapy in pediatric oncology. Patients must be carefully evaluated clinically and with MRI imaging. High-dose dexamethasone has been demonstrated to be beneficial [13, 14] and should be given to all patients presenting with symptomatic cord compression. Surgical decompression should be considered in patients presenting with spinal instability, bony compression, or paraplegia [14, 15]. This being said, the indication for surgery and/or chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy should be decided on an individual basis by an expert multidisciplinary team. Details of workup, differential diagnosis, and management of this emergency are presented in Chap. 6.

Rationale and Evidence

In the adult population, radiation therapy is well established as an effective modality of emergency treatment for spinal cord compression in combination with
steroids and surgery when indicated [14, 16, 17]. However, in the pediatric population, data on the efficacy of emergency radiation therapy for spinal cord compression are sparse and difficult to interpret. The series reported in the literature are heterogeneous with various histologies, clinical presentations, and treatment sequences (steroids/surgery/chemotherapy/radiotherapy). Bertsch et al. reviewed 33 pediatric patients with spinal cord/cauda equina compression or intrinsic cord lesions treated with urgent RT[8]. The most frequent histology was primitive neuroectodermal tumor (PNET), and weakness was the most frequent presenting complaint. The majority of patients (85%) responded to radiotherapy, 55% experiencing an improvement of their neurologic signs and 30% stabilization. De Bernardi et al. published on 76 neuroblastoma patients with symptomatic spinal cord compression at diagnosis [18]. All patients were started on corticosteroid therapy and 11 patients were treated with radiotherapy. In terms of neurologic outcome in patients who received RT, 36% recovered, 27% improved, 27% stabilized, while 9% became worse neurologically.
Technique

Whenever possible, diagnostic magnetic resonance imaging should be obtained to help determine precisely the extension of the lesion causing the spinal cord compression. 3D conformal planning should be used, CT scan imaging notably allowing a better appreciation of the depth of the lesion and the dose delivered to the spinal cord. A simple parallel-opposed technique using 6-MV photon beams is most commonly utilized in this setting. Various dose regimens are used depending particularly on the histology and location of the tumor, clinical presentation, and in the context of previous irradiation. Twenty Gy in 5 daily fractions and 30 Gy in 10 daily fractions are commonly used dose regimens.

Expected Side Effects

Very little data are available in the literature to describe the potential side effects of emergency radiation therapy for spinal cord compression in the pediatric population. Nausea and vomiting can be avoided with the use of appropriate antiemetics.
prior to each fraction of radiation. Localized erythema and dryness of the skin in the radiation fields can be seen and easily treated with moisturizing cream. Temporary flare-up of pain associated with the lesion can occasionally occur and may be controlled by increased analgesia or corticosteroids.

In terms of subacute/late effects, radiation-induced myelopathy is rarely seen and can usually be avoided by observing known radiation tolerance of the spinal cord. However, exceptional cases of radiation-induced myelopathy can occur even with doses established as within the normal tolerance of the organ. Radiation-induced myelopathy is a diagnosis of exclusion based on many factors including the irradiation dose received by the spinal cord, correlation of symptoms with the region of the cord irradiated, and specific findings on MRI imaging [17]. An expert radiation oncologist should always be involved in the diagnosis and management of any case.

Scoliosis may be a late effect, particularly if prior decompressive surgery has been performed [18, 19].

**Case 3**

This 6-year-old boy with metastatic neuroblastoma was previously active and suddenly, over 2 days, became unable to move his lower limbs and developed urinary retention. An MRI of spine demonstrated spinal cord compression due to a metastatic intradural extramedullary metastatic lesion in the thoracic spine (Fig. 16.14). The child was urgently referred to a radiation oncologist, and palliative radiation of 20 Gy/5 fractions to the T5–T9 thoracic levels was planned using CT imaging and a simple parallel-opposed pair technique, with AP/PA fields (Figs. 16.15 and 16.16).
Summary

Every spinal cord compression case should benefit from a multidisciplinary approach in order to determine the best sequence of treatments (steroids and/or surgery and/or chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy).

In general, radiation therapy leads to improvement or stabilization of neurologic symptoms in the majority of patients.
MR imaging of the lesion should be obtained, and conformal 3D radiation therapy techniques should always be preferred. Significant side effects of irradiation in this context are very rare with standard-dose regimens.

**Critical Neurologic Losses**

Radiation therapy is a modality which provides a highly effective and rapid locoregional response. When a child is experiencing significant neurologic loss due to tumor progression, radiation therapy is often effective at limiting further loss and can be associated with full recovery in some instances. A classic example is a rapidly progressing skull-base mass compressing the optic structures. Specific histology and clinical presentation varies considerably from one case to another. The opinion of an expert pediatric radiation oncologist should be urgently requested in situations where a child is at significant risk of neurologic loss due to a tumor mass.

**Rationale and Evidence**

No series of patients have been published regarding this indication. One case report by Kaikov in 1996 described the use of radiation therapy in two pediatric patients with acute leukemia who developed leukemic infiltration of the optic nerve [20]. One patient had her vision saved with the rapid administration of 18 Gy in 10 daily fractions over 2 weeks to the meninges, posterior orbit, and optic nerves.

**Technique**

The technique and dose are determined individually for each case, and CT simulation and MR imaging are highly valuable. 3D conformal planning is usually mandatory given the proximity of the lesion to the critical neurologic structure. To expedite treatment delivery, a simple technique may be used to deliver the first few fractions of radiation while a more sophisticated plan using IMRT techniques can be developed. IMRT is a more complex and resource-consuming irradiation technique, but allows for better sparing of the surrounding normal tissues (eye structures, optic nerves, optic structures, brain) while achieving highly conformal coverage of the tumor mass.
**Expected Side Effects**

The possible indication, benefits, and side effects of radiation must be determined individually for each clinical situation. As an illustration, in the case example presented here, expected side effects secondary to irradiation (not secondary to tumor or chemotherapy) are described in Table 16.2 [21].

**Case 4**

A 7-year-old boy who presented with a short history of plugged nose sensation and rapidly decreasing vision in the left eye. MRI images (Figs. 16.17 and 16.18) documented a large nasopharynx/nasal mass that was invading the skull base and extending into the left orbital apex region, accounting for his significant loss of visual fields on the left side.

A transnasal biopsy confirmed a nasopharyngeal embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma. Radiation therapy was started urgently the following morning. Treatment was first planned using 3D conformal planning, and a fusion of CT scan images with MR images was done. A parallel-opposed photon beam technique (Figs. 16.19–16.21) was used for the first five fractions. This technique gave sufficient tumor coverage while allowing for rapid delivery of radiotherapy in the context of visual loss secondary to the growing nasopharyngeal tumor. Then, during the first days of treatment, a second plan using IMRT was developed (Figs. 16.22 and 16.23) and replaced the 3D conformal plan after five treatments. The patient received more than 80% of his irradiation via IMRT, limiting the normal tissue exposure of this treatment. A total dose of 50.4 Gy in 28 daily fractions was delivered.

A follow-up CT scan 1 year after treatment (Fig. 16.24) showed complete resolution of the mass. The patient has had some improvement in his visual symptoms, but vision remains impaired.

**Summary**

Radiation therapy can provide a highly effective and rapid local and locoregional response, and this can be very useful in certain clinical settings to avoid critical neurologic loss.

A classic example is a rapidly progressing mass compressing the optic apparatus. The opinion of an expert pediatric radiation oncologist should be requested in situations where a child could suffer a significant neurologic loss due to a tumor mass. The possible indication, benefit, and side effects of an irradiation in this context will be determined individually for each clinical situation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ</th>
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<td>Dryness and skin erythema</td>
<td>Acute side effect</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moisturizing cream only is usually sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resolves in 2–3 weeks postirradiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>Patchy loss of hair corresponding to the entry and exit portals of the radiation beams</td>
<td>Acute side effect</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>None, hair will regrow spontaneously in 2–3 months following the end of radiation therapy in most areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal/sinus mucosa</td>
<td>Dryness, erythema, and excessive secretions</td>
<td>Acute and subacute side effect</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Regular irrigation of nose with saline solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible epistaxis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pain medication if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excessive secretions can persist for a few months after treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral mucosa (palate)</td>
<td>Possible temporary xerostomia, erythema of mucosa, and possible ulceration</td>
<td>Acute side effect</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Analgesic mouthwash per oral pain medication if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soft diet and dietician follow-up if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular follow-up of the patient’s weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symptoms will resolve in the weeks following the end of treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes (conjunctiva)</td>
<td>Erythema and dryness of the conjunctiva</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Low to moderate</td>
<td>Artificial tears/ointment for comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symptoms will resolve in the weeks following the end of treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General status</td>
<td>Increased fatigue</td>
<td>Acute and subacute side effect</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>No treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will resolve in the weeks to months following irradiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bones/muscles</td>
<td>Moderate effect on future growth based on the age of the patient and dose/fractionation</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible facial hypoplasia/asymmetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surgical intervention if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Side effect</td>
<td>Time of onset</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth</td>
<td>Impact on future teeth growth</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Adequate follow-up in collaboration with a pediatric dentist specialized in oncology Intervention if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parotid</td>
<td>Xerostomia</td>
<td>Acute, subacute and/or long-term effect</td>
<td>Low to moderate</td>
<td>Referral to a pediatric dentist specialized in oncology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pituitary hormones deficiency</td>
<td>Growth hormone and thyroid hormone are the most likely to be affected</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Adequate regular follow-up in collaboration with a pediatric endocrinologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FSH and LH hormones could also be affected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hormone replacement if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye (lenses)</td>
<td>Development of bilateral cataracts</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Adequate follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cataract extraction if symptomatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [23, 25]</td>
<td>Increased risk of secondary malignancies</td>
<td>Long-term effect</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Follow-up in a long-term effects clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surveillance according to guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 16.17  Large nasopharynx/nasal embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma invading the skull base and extending into the left orbital apex region

Fig. 16.18  Large nasopharynx/nasal embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma invading the skull base and extending into the left orbital apex region
Fig. 16.19 Radiation therapy with laterally opposed fields

Fig. 16.20 Radiation therapy with laterally opposed fields
Fig. 16.21 Radiation therapy with laterally opposed fields

Fig. 16.22 Radiation therapy using IMRT planning technique
Fig. 16.23  Radiation therapy using IMRT planning technique

Fig. 16.24  Follow-up CT scan 1 year after treatment showing complete resolution of the mass
The technique can vary depending on the precise context, but 3D conformal planning is usually mandatory given the proximity of the lesion to the critical neurologic structure.

**Conclusion**

Radiotherapy can be a beneficial and efficacious treatment in the context of pediatric oncological emergencies, with the potential of providing rapid tumor response and decompression of critical structures.

**References**


## Index

### A

**Abdominal complications**
- constipation
  - case study, 150
  - definition, 144
  - management, 145
  - prevalence and diagnosis, 144

**Pancreatitis**
- case study, 151–152
- definition, 148–149
- management, 149–150
- prevalence and diagnosis, 149

**Pneumatosis intestinalis (PI)**
- case study, 151
- definition, 147–148
- management, 148
- prevalence and diagnosis, 148

**Typhlitis**
- case study, 151
- definition, 145
- management, 147
- prevalence and diagnosis, 146–147

**Abdominal masses**
- abdominal compartment syndrome, 31, 35
- emergency radiation therapy
  - rationale and evidence, 161–162
  - side effects, 162–168
  - technique, 162
  - intra-abdominal pressure, 31, 32
  - management, 32

**ABO antibodies**, 64

**Accidental dislodgments**, 92

**Acute radiation reactions**, 162

**Airway compression**, 27

**Allergic reactions**, 70

**Allopurinol**, 18, 21, 22

**Aluminum hydroxide**, 20

**Aminoglycoside**, 49

**Anesthesia consult**, 27

**Antibiotic coverage**, 149

**Antibiotics**, 45, 48–52

**Anticipatory emesis**, 122

**Anticoagulation**
- duration of, 89
- therapy, 75, 78, 79

**Antithrombin (AT)**, 79

**Asparaginase**, 79, 111–112, 148, 149, 151

**Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses (APON)**, 2

### B

**Ball-valve clots**, 94–95

**β-lactam antibiotic**, 49

**Bleeding complications**, 66

**Blood and blood product transfusions**
- CMV-seronegative products, 68
- informed consent, 63–64
- irradiation, 67
- noninfectious complications, 68–69
- overview, 63
- platelet transfusion, 65–67
- recurrent reactions, pretreatment for, 70
- red blood cell transfusion (PRBC), 64–65
- transfusion reactions, management of, 69–70

**Bone marrow**
- aspiration, 55, 59, 60, 62
- recovery, 50

**Bowel ischemia**, 147

### C

**Calcium gluconate**, 19, 20

**Candida sp.**, 128

**Cardiac arrhythmias**, 14, 15
Cauda equina syndrome (CES), 37–41
See also Spinal cord compression (SCC)
Cell cycle, 105–106
Central venous catheters (CVC), 50
Central venous lines (CVL)
complications of, 92
types of, 91
Central venous thrombosis
CVL dysfunction/occlusion,
nonthrombotic causes of, 92–94
CVL occlusion, 92
CVL-related thrombosis
complications of, 96–97
diagnosis of, 97–98
management of, 98–102
thrombotic CVL occlusion, 94–95
Cerebral sinovenous thrombosis
(CSVT), 71, 75
anatomy of, 84–85
in children with cancer, 84–86
clinical presentation, 86–87
diagnosis of, 87, 88
etiology of, 85–86
management, 87–89
outcome of patients, 89
pathogenesis of, 84–85
Cerebrovascular accidents, 84
Chemotherapeutic drugs
classes of, 105–108
cytotoxic spills, 116
e extravasation (paravasat), 113–117
hypersensitivity reactions (HSRs), 110–119
methotrexate clearance and toxicity,
109–110
Chest X-ray, 27, 29
Childhood cancer registry, 3
CMV-seronegative products, 68
Colony-stimulating factors (CSFs)
dosing and administration of, 135
pediatric oncology patients, 135
side effects of, 136
Compression syndrome, 10
Conscious sedation, 55
Constipation
case study, 150
definition, 144
management, 145–146
prevalence and diagnosis, 144
Creatinine clearance, 18
Critical neurologic losses
rationale and evidence, 171
side effects, 172–178
technique, 171
Cross sensitivity, 112
CSFs. See Colony-stimulating
factors (CSFs)
CSVT. See Cerebral sinovenous thrombosis
(CSVT)
CVC. See Central venous
catheters (CVC)
CVL. See Central venous lines (CVL)
Cytotoxic spill, 113, 116, 118, 119
Cytotoxic therapy, 16

D
Decompression, 32, 33
Decontamination, 116
Desensitization protocols, 111
Diuresis, 17
Dysphagia, 29
Dyspnea, 29

E
Echocardiogram, 27, 29
Electrolyte replacement, 132
Electrolyte supplements, 7
Emergency radiation therapy
abdominal masses, 161–166
critical neurologic losses, 171–179
mediastinal masses, 156–161
principles of, 155–156
spinal cord compression, 166–171
Enemas, 145
Extravasation (Paravasat), 113–117

F
Farber, Sidney, 2
Febrile neutropenia, 6
Febrile reactions, 69
Fecal loading, 144, 150
Fever and neutropenia
antimicrobial therapy, 49
assessment and clinical
evaluation, 45–46
definitions, 43–44
diagnostic evaluation, 46–48
duration of therapy, 50–52
etiology, 44
indications for central venous catheter
removal, 50
overview, 43
risk factors, 45
treatment, 48–49
Flow cytometry, 5
G
G-CSF. See Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF)
Glucarpidase, 110
Gram-negative bacteria, 44
Gram-positive bacteria, 44
Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF), 132
Guideline for platelet transfusion, 66

H
Hematochezia, 146
Hemorrhage, 9
Hepatomegaly, 161–168
High-dose dexamethasone, 166
High-energy photons, 155
HSRs. See Hypersensitivity reactions (HSRs)
5-HT3 receptor antagonist, 123
Hypercoagulable state, 85
Hyperfractionated regimen, 157
Hyperhydration, 17, 20
Hyperkalemia, 13, 14, 18, 19
Hyperphosphatemia, 13, 18, 20
Hypersensitivity reactions (HSRs), 110–119
Hyperuricemia, 13, 18, 19
Hypocalcemia, 13, 18, 20

I
ICP. See Intracranial pressure (ICP)
IMRT. See Intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT)
Inferior vena cava obstruction, 161
Inflammatory signs, 46
Infusion time, 65, 66
Initial management, of new diagnosis
arrival and first steps in hospital, 6–7
hyperleukocytosis, 8
initial contact/referral, 5–6
leukapheresis, 8–9
solid tumors/brain tumors, 9–11
Intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), 156
International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP), 1, 2
Intra-abdominal hypertension, 31, 32
Intracranial pressure (ICP), 84, 86–88
Irradiation, 67
IV hydration, 6

L
Leucovorin, 109, 110
Leukostasis, 8
Lumbar puncture, 55–57
Lymphadenopathy, 5, 7, 10, 11
Lymph node biopsy, 28, 29

M
Mediastinal masses
anterior mediastinum, 26
definition, 25
emergency radiation therapy
rationale and evidence, 156–157
side effects, 157–160
 technique, 157
investigation, 27
management, 25
middle mediastinum, 26
posterior mediastinum, 27–28
superior vena cava syndrome, 28–30
Medullary bone pain, 136
Methotrexate (MTX), 109–110
Mucosal injury, 147
Mural thrombosis, 95
Musculoskeletal toxicity, 162
Myelopathy, 169
Myelosuppression, 128, 135

N
Nausea, 122–123
Necrotic tissue, 113
Neutropenia. See Fever
Neutropenic enterocolitis, 145, 146

O
Oral magnesium supplementation, 132
Oral mucosa, 46

P
Pancreatitis
case study, 151–152
definition, 148–149
management, 149–150
prevalence and diagnosis, 149
Pancytopenia, 5
Parallel-opposed technique, 160, 168
PE. See Pulmonary embolism (PE)
Pediatric oncology
clinical trials, 3, 4
history of, 1
hospice, 4
incidence, 3
palliative care, 1, 4
professional organizations, 2
radiation therapy (see Emergency radiation therapy)
supportive care, 3
Peritonitis, 147, 148
Personal protective equipment, 118
PI. See Pneumatosis intestinalis (PI)
Pinch-off syndrome, 93, 94
Platelet transfusion, 65–67
Pneumatosis intestinalis (PI)
case study, 151
definition, 147–148
management, 148
prevalence and diagnosis, 148
Pneumocystis prophylaxis, 123, 128
Port-A-Cath, 99
Postthrombotic syndrome, 97
Procedures
bone marrow aspiration and biopsy, 61
conscious sedation, 55
dry tap, 59
local anesthetic, 59
lumbar puncture plus intrathecal chemotherapy, 56
Prolonged neutropenia, 128, 135
Prophylactic antibiotics, 45
Prothrombotic disorder, 85
Prothrombotic effects, 95
Pulmonary embolism (PE), 73, 74

R
Rasburicase, 8, 18, 21
RAT. See Right atrial thrombosis (RAT)
Recurrent CSVT, 89
Red blood cell transfusion (PRBC), 64–65
Renal clearance, 109
Renal failure, 8, 9
Renal insufficiency, 15
Respiratory distress, 45
Rh immune globulin, 65
Right atrial thrombosis (RAT), 73

S
SCC. See Spinal cord compression (SCC)
Schweisguth, Odilie, 1
Scoliosis, 169
Sepsis, 44–46
Septic emboli, 50, 52
SIOP. See International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP)
Sleeve thrombus, 94, 95
Spinal cord compression (SCC)
constipation, 37, 39
eMERgency radiation therapy
rationale and evidence, 166–168
side effects, 168–170
technique, 168
high-dose steroids, 38–40
management, 39
motor weakness, 38–40
sciatica, 38
urinary retention, 37–39
Spinal instability, 166
Splenomegaly, 136
Superior vena cava syndrome (SVCS), 28, 154
See also Mediastinal masses
Supportive care
antifungal prophylaxis,
128, 130–131
electrolyte replacement, 132
granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF), 132
menses suppression, 136–140
nausea and vomiting, 122–123
pneumocystis prophylaxis, 123, 128
Therapeutic amenorrhhea, 136–140
Thrombocytopenia, 136
Thromboembolism (TE) cancer
anticoagulant agent, 75, 77–78
anticoagulation therapy
around invasive procedures, 78
in presence of thrombocytopenia, 78
antithrombin replacement, 79
child with suspected thromboembolism,
74–75
primary thromboprophylaxis, 79
secondary thromboprophylaxis, 80
therapy, child with TE, 79
thrombosis
anatomical site of, 71–74
in children with cancer, 75
Thrombolytic agents, 95, 97
Thrombolytic therapy, 89
Thromboprophylaxis, 79–80
TLS. See Tumor lysis syndrome (TLS)
Transfusion
guidelines, 64
reactions, 69–70
Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, 128
Tumor lysis syndrome (TLS)
clinical manifestation,
16–17
definition of, 13–14
incidence, 14–15
presentation, 15–16
treatment
hyperkalemia, 19
hyperphosphatemia, 20
hypocalcemia, 20
and supportive care, 17–19
Tunnel infection, 50

Typhlitis
case study, 151
definition, 145–146
management, 147
prevalence and diagnosis, 146–147

U
Ultrasound (US), 32

V
Venogram, 98
Venous infarction, 84
Ventricular outflow obstruction, 27
Vomiting, 122–123