CASE REPORT

Radiotherapy for lung metastases in a patient with Ewing sarcoma

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Abstract

Purpose. To assess the benefit of therapy for multiple lung metastases in a young female patient previously treated with operation, local radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Patient. Lung metastases occurred in a young female patient 13 months after finishing combined treatment of a Ewing sarcoma of the left eleventh rib. Primary treatment had included surgical removal, 51 Gy local radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Method. 20 Gy total dose was applied to the lungs of both sides in two courses with an additional 15 Gy to the mediastinum.

Results and Discussion. Complete radiological regression was achieved at the end of therapy which was maintained during the follow-up period of 16 months.

Key words: Ewing sarcoma, lung metastases, palliative radiotherapy.

Introduction

Ewing sarcoma is the second most frequent bone tumour among children and young adults. Comprises 10–15% of all bone tumors. It rarely occurs under the age of 5 or above the age of 30. The male to female ratio is 1.5:1.

Ewing sarcoma arises intramedullary, breaks through the cortex and extend as a soft tissue mass. Virtually any bone can be the site of the primary lesion, but the lower half of the body is much more frequently involved than the upper half. The frequency of rib involvement follows that of the femur, the pelvic bones, the fibula, the humerus and the tibia. It has a moderately bad prognosis.\(^1\)\(^,\)\(^3\) Distant metastases are frequent to the lungs and other bones. Metastatic involvement of lymph nodes occurs in less than 10% of cases. Increasing pain, swelling and fever are the leading clinical symptoms.

Plain X-ray with bone and bone marrow scintigraphy demonstrate primary or secondary skeletal involvement. Computed tomography (CT) and MRI are informative for the judgement of periosteal and the intramedullary extension.\(^2\)

Diagnosis

A 29-year-old female patient presented with increasing back pain on the left side, effort dyspnoea and fever. Chest X-ray showed a palm-sized suprarenal infiltration on the left with minimal pleural effusion. Laboratory parameters were normal except for a raised sedimentation rate and leucocytosis. Pneumonia was suspected and antibiotic treatment started but dyspnoea and the level of the pleural effusion increased. Cytology of the pleural fluid suggested inflammation but further X-ray showed extensive confluent rarefaction of the XIth rib with bone destruction. Whole body bone and bone marrow scan showed no changes elsewhere.

Primary treatment

After resection of the involved rib, histopathological examination (including immuno-histochemistry) gave the diagnosis of Ewing sarcoma. Postoperative radiochemotherapy was commenced in June 1994. The chemotherapy comprised 6 courses of VIP (200 mg Vepeside, 800 mg Ifosfamide, 60 mg Cisplatin, with Uromitexan rescue). Radiotherapy was delivered after the first course of chemotherapy (51 Gy locally with a high-energy electron beam). The first course of chemotherapy had to be interrupted because of dysuria. Colony stimulating factor was necessary because of leukopenia after further courses.
Fig. 1. Plain X-ray before pulmonary irradiation.

Fig. 2. CT scan before pulmonary irradiation.
Radiotherapy for lung metastases in Ewing sarcoma

Complementary mediastinal irradiation was given after a six weeks interruption, with 15 Gy mid-plane were applied via central-symmetrically positioned, opposed portals in 1.5 Gy fractions.

Prophylactic irradiation of the right hemithorax was started 4 weeks after the mediastinal irradiation. 20 Gy total mid plane dose was applied in 1.5 Gy fractions. The mediastinal treated volume overlapped to its half width with the left and right hemithorax volumes for increasing the total dose in the mediastinum. Matching problems are clinically negligible at these magnitudes of total dose if applied sequentially to these regions (Fig. 3).

The overall treatment took 23 weeks including the breaks. Complete remission (plain X-ray and CT) lasted for 16 months (Figs 4 and 5).

Local recurrence appeared in the left lumbar area near to the resection site. CT showed a 40 × 75 mm mass involving the end of the resected XIth rib infiltrating the musculature between the left kidney and spleen. An additional 30 Gy was applied and resulted in complete remission of the recurrence.

Discussion

Metastasising Ewing sarcoma is associated with short term remission and survival but pulmonary irradiation may prove effective.

Data are available concerning the prophylactic and therapeutic use of pulmonary irradiation in patients with Ewing sarcoma. Prophylactically total doses of 1500–1800 cGy were applied in 150–200 cGy daily fractions within 2.5–3 weeks.

Doses of the magnitude plus chemotherapy resulted in prolonged disease free survival and prolonged survival in the IESS-I study versus chemotherapy alone.

Therapeutically the same total doses plus local boost were applied to 2000–2500 cGy resulting in complete plus partial remission rates 77%.

Pulmonary metastases were inoperable in this young female patient. Primary chemotherapy were associated with severe side effects, although radiation therapy was well tolerated. The left hemithorax and the lower posterior mediastinum were irradiated with the aim of achieving therapeutic effect on manifest multiple lesions. Nevertheless we did the same for prophylactic purposes on the uninvolved right hemithorax. The reasons for the choice of this careful, sequential approach were the following:

- multiple, extensive lesions on the involved left side and therefore palliative aim;
- primary combined treatment was associated with haematological side effects;
- better radiation tolerance of the lung with partial volume-exposure; and
- special importance of the right lung in the respiratory function in case of massive contralateral impairment.

Sequential irradiation of the hemithorax on both

Fig. 3. Treatment scheme: first phase: portals 1 and 2, left hemithorax; second phase: portals 3 and 4, mediastinum; and third phase: portals 5 and 6, right hemithorax.
sides and mediastinum may involve more matching problems than chest irradiation of the two sides at the same time, but the space of time between the treatment phases and the described field arrangement contribute to decrease them at low doses. The outpatient treatment led to radiological complete remission and improvement in quality of life without dyspnoea. She has been symptom free for 16 months after finishing therapy and is able to pursue some sport.
Radiotherapy for lung metastases in Ewing sarcoma

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