

What is a Bone Marrow Transplant?

By: Matthew Mundy, LMSW

My Role

- I am the Inpatient/Outpatient Bone Marrow Transplant & Cellular Therapy Social Worker.
- I was previously the Inpatient Lymphoma/Myeloma SW for two years. Before becoming a SW, I worked for the Federal Government.
- I primarily focus on providing support to my patients, assist with discharge planning, applying for grants, and I help co-facilitate a caregiver assistance class.

Types of Bone Marrow Transplants and Cellular Therapy Treatment

- Double Cord Stem Cell Transplant
- Allogenic Stem Cell Transplant
- Autologous Stem Cell Transplant
- CART Cell Therapy
- Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocyte (TIL) Therapy

Allogenic Stem Cell Transplant

- An Allo Transplant uses stem cells from a family member or donor to help treat the patient's underlying disease.
- An Allo transplant requires inpatient care and expect to be in the hospital for a month.
- The month- long admission includes pre-conditioning and post-transplant monitoring. Patients also must be in The Helmsley for 2 weeks post-discharge.
- The first 100 days is crucial as your immune system is building strength. On day 100 they will do BMBX to check on disease status.
- Some people will feel better within 3-6 months, and some may take up to a year to feel like themselves again.
- An Allo transplant has numerous side effects from: relapse in disease, GVHD, poor nutritional intake, and deconditioning.

Autologous Stem Cell Transplant

- Less intense in nature compared to an Allo SCT because you are not using donor or a family member's stem cells.
- Stem cells are collected before you are given high-dose chemotherapy.
- Once chemotherapy is complete, your healthy stem cells will be inserted back into the bone marrow.
- Hospital admission is 3-4 weeks and expect a month or two of recovery time at home.

CART and TIL Therapies

- CART involves the collection of your T-Cells and they are genetically modified in a lab. Turn around time is about 3 weeks.
- Conditioning and Lymphodepletion is completed before CART treatment.
- CART can be completed in the hospital or in the clinic. Approximately 2 weeks in the hospital.
- TIL Therapy is a new line of treatment for people who have Metastatic Melanoma.
- Patients must have surgery to a small portion of the Tumor. In the lab they will manipulate the TIL cells. Turnaround time is 4-6 weeks.
- In the hospital, you will receive chemotherapy before the TIL treatment. Total hospital admission is 2-3 weeks.

Side Effects of all Treatments

- For an Allo, GVHD is one of the biggest concerns that can cause numerous side effects. Those side effects include gut issues, vision issues, and intense rashes.
- For an Auto, fatigue and nausea are common side effects.
- For CART and TIL treatments one of the biggest concerns is Neurotoxicity along with fatigue and nausea.
- For all the types of transplants and therapies we offer, it's important to encourage movement as deconditioning is very likely.

Importance of Caregiver Support

- In order to proceed with a Transplant/ Cellular Therapy at Weill Cornell you must have a caregiver before treatment.
- The role of the caregiver is crucial as they will accompany you to post-transplant appointments.
- Caregivers assist with everyday tasks that can be challenging for patients when they are home (laundry, food prep, bathing, and dressing).
- I always encourage family to have multiple caregivers if feasible because this role is extremely demanding.

Self Care

- Self Care is crucial for the patient and caregiver.
- Self care is different for everyone but find something that works for you!
- Some examples: meditating, journaling, reading, praying, watching TV, exercising, etc.

Resources

- Blood Cancer United, International Myeloma Foundation, NMDP, The American Melanoma Foundation, and Red Door Community are great organizations to engage with.
- Medicare Rights Center (tel: 800-333-4114), helps provide advocacy and counseling when it comes to Medicare plans.
- Engage with your Oncology SW as they may have support groups in person or on Zoom.

Contact Information

- Best way to reach me is via email:
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Questions
