

Mesotheliomas

Viljem Kovač

Malignant mesothelioma is a rare type of cancer, the incidence of which is still increasing both in our country and also throughout the world. In Slovenia, the production and use of asbestos was prohibited in 1996, but we have not yet managed to reduce the burden of this disease due to the extremely long latency period between exposure to asbestos and incidence of the disease. Different clinical

trials confirmed the effectiveness of systemic treatment, such as the combination of cisplatin and gemcitabine and the combination of cisplatin and pemetrexed. So far, only the Netherlands and Slovenia have managed to prove that modern chemotherapy treatment statistically significantly prolonged the median overall survival of the entire population of patients with this disease.

Corticosteroids in brain tumours

Nika Zorko and Tanja Roš

Corticosteroids (CS) have been used for decades to reduce peritumoral edema in patients with brain tumours, both primary and metastatic. Despite their long use, the mechanisms of their actions are still not completely known in terms of biological and clinical effectiveness. Dexamethasone is the most frequently used CS in neuro-oncology due to its beneficial pharmacokinetic, pharmacody-

namic and other properties. As CS have many undesirable effects that can impair the quality of the patient's life, we use the lowest effective doses for the shortest period possible. Several new target medicines for cancer treatment obstruct the paths in the process of angiogenesis, and they are also effective in decreasing the peritumoral edema in patients with brain tumours.

Suicide among persons with childhood leukaemia in Slovenia

Mojca Čížek Sajko, Uršula Julija Sajko and Berta Jereb

Persons with childhood leukaemia often suffer from physical and psychosocial consequences of the disease and its treatment. Several studies have shown that depression and suicidal behaviour are expressed strongly in persons with a childhood cancer experience. In our study, we researched the occurrence of suicides among persons with childhood leukaemia compared to the general population in Slovenia in the period 1978–2010. The expected number of suicides was calculated based on the control group of individuals from the general population with the same gender, age at the beginning of observation, starting year and duration of observation as the research

group, thus group of persons with childhood cancer. The study showed that none of the persons with childhood cancer committed suicide in the period 1978–2010, which is not statistically different from the expected number of suicides (0.448) in comparison with the general population in Slovenia. The findings of this study indicate that, despite the significantly increased expression of suicidal behaviour among survivors of childhood leukaemia in Slovenia compared to the general population, suicides do not occur more often among people with childhood leukaemia than among the general population.

An overlooked benefit of neoadjuvant chemotherapy in the treatment of muscle-invasive cancer of the urinary bladder

Andrej Žist, Tomaž Milanež, Breda Škrbinc, Vesna Zadnik, Boštjan Šeruga

Urinary bladder cancer is the third most frequent malignancy of the genitourinary tract, and its incidence and mortality have been increasing in Slovenia. Loco-regional treatment is key in radical treatment of the muscle-invasive cancer of the urinary bladder, and systemic chemotherapy treatment may provide additional benefits to the patients. Phase III clinical trials have demonstrated a significant prolongation of the overall survival of patients treated with

neoadjuvant cisplatin-based combination chemotherapy. However, neoadjuvant chemotherapy has not yet been established sufficiently in everyday clinical practice, despite its clearly demonstrated effectiveness. Every patient with muscle-invasive cancer of the urinary bladder, who is receiving treatment with a curative intent and is a candidate for systemic treatment, should be informed of the possibility of receiving neoadjuvant chemotherapy treatment.

HPV self-sampling as an alternative strategy in non-responders for cervical screening

Urška Ivanuš and Maja Primic-Žakelj

Background: In well-organised cervical cancer screening programmes in Europe and also in Slovenia, the majority of new cases of cervical cancer occur in those women who do not attend regular screening. Seeking new ways to increase coverage of the target population has thus become one of the key challenges. According to the findings of the meta-analyses, the best method is to invite the non-responders to perform vaginal self-sampling for the detection of high-risk human papillomavirus infection (HPV testing) at home. We were interested in the effectiveness of this approach in detecting pre-cancerous and early cancerous lesions of the cervix compared to the existing approaches.

Methods: A systematic review of the results of studies published in the field of HPV self-sampling within organised screening programmes in Europe.

Results: The two main results were the proportion of women who performed HPV self-sampling at home and the detection rate of the severe pre-cancerous lesions or cervical cancer. The additional results were the types of testers and methods of analyses used in the studies, quality of self-samples, prevalence of HPV among women who performed self-sampling, and participation of HPV-positive women in further diagnostics.

Conclusions: Alternative screening of non-responders by HPV self-sampling at home is currently the most promising approach to increase screening rates in order to enable further decrease of cervical cancer incidence in well organised cervical screening programmes. However, as the results differ between studies and countries, it is necessary to conduct a pilot study in an environment where regular screening takes place, before upgrading the existing screening programme.

Detection of the von Hippel-Lindau hereditary cancer syndrome: determination of mutations in the VHL gene

Maša Milatovič, Uršula Prošenc Zmrzljak and Srdjan Novaković

The Department of Molecular Diagnostics at the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana has introduced testing of mutations in the von Hippel-Lindau (VHL) suppressor gene. Mutations in this gene increase the probability for the development of cancerous diseases associated with the »von Hippel-Lindau« (VHL) syndrome and also the development of sporadic kidney cancer. Testing of hereditary mutations in patients suspected of having the VHL syndrome enables early and correct diagnosis of the disease. Presence of a mutation in the VHL gene is sufficient to confirm the diagnosis of VHL syndrome also in the absence of typical tumours. It is tested using the direct

sequencing method and the MLPA (multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification) method. While sequencing allows us to detect point mutations and small deletions and insertions, the MLPA method is used to detect the presence of large deletions and insertions in the gene or a deletion of the entire gene. Timely detection of mutations in genes associated with the development of cancer is important for the carriers of mutations, as a proven mutation is a reason for an adapted clinical monitoring and/or preventive measures in mutation carriers. This results in increased possibilities for the prevention and early detection of cancer.

Collaboration of a family physician with specialists - inter-level collaboration

Nena Kopčavar Guček

On the basic level of health care in Slovenia, the role of a physician is a role of a doorman and coordinator: besides the low-threshold access to health care, regulation of the health system has also entrusted him with the role of a doorman - coordinator.

Some studies conducted in our regions have shown that a family physician solves nearly 80% of the patients' problems in his practice. An analysis of 12,296 consultations in the family physician's practice revealed that, in Slovenia, 20.2% of the examined patients are referred to see a specialist. The frequency of referrals is affected by patient characteristics, the physician and the environment in which the physician practices.

A specialist in general/family medicine often communicates with specialists at the secondary and tertiary levels of health care. Family medicine specialists learn to collaborate with specialists at the secondary and tertiary levels through a module comprising 16 pedagogical hours.

Our health system provides for formal channels of communication, and the development of information technology offers unused solutions. Good practice examples for inter-level communication enable physicians to establish a direct contact with the clinical specialist and the patients to transit the health system in a faster and more effective manner. Good treatment outcomes depend on a well-coordinated multidisciplinary management.

Interpersonal communication between members of the multidisciplinary team treating individual patients is necessary and inevitable. Besides classic and formal communication, there are also numerous informal channels available, which have a positive effect on the relationship between members of the multidisciplinary team, and thus also between different levels of patient management. Some examples of good practice at this level have already been established, facilitating the work of the participating physicians and, most of all, affecting the treatment outcomes.

Paraganglioma as a metastasis: a case report of a patient with paraganglioma and testicular cancer

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Introduction: Carotid paragangliomas are usually slowly enlarging and painless lateral neck masses. These mostly benign lesions are often recognised due to their typical location, vessel displacement and intratumoral blood flow, features that are usually observed in different imaging modalities. In differential diagnosis, lymphadenopathies, branchial cleft cysts, salivary gland tumours, schwannomas and aneurysms of the carotid artery should be considered.

Case presentation: A 36-year-old male was presented with a lump on the right side of the neck eleven months after being treated for testicular cancer. He was referred for fine-needle aspiration biopsy. The sample was diagnosed as a lymph node metastasis of a teratoma component of the germinal tumour or of another primary

tumour. Performed neck US and fluorine [F-18]-fluoro-deoxy-D-glucose (FDG) PET-CT showed no signs of hypervascularity or vessel displacement. A functional neck dissection of levels II through V was planned. During the procedure, a suspicion of carotid paraganglioma was raised, and the tumour was carefully dissected from the walls of both carotid arteries with minimal blood loss. The histology report revealed carotid paraganglioma with no metastasis in the rest of the lymph nodes.

Conclusion: This is a case of carotid paraganglioma over-treatment by neck dissection performed in a patient previously diagnosed with testicular germ cell tumour.