



PRESS RELEASE

Children with cancer and Stem Cell Transplantation (SCT): A new EBMT clinical trial aims to demonstrate that omitting of irradiation in conditioning for SCT in children with relapse of high-risk leukaemia results in equivalent survival as compared to irradiation based conditioning

Barcelona, Thursday February 12, 2015 – The International Childhood Cancer Day will be celebrated this Sunday. On this occasion, the European Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation is informing about a new prospective international multicentre trial, ALL SCTped 2012 FORUM (“For Omitting Radiation Under Majority Age”). This trial will evaluate whether the absence of total body irradiation (TBI) in conditioning for SCT will result in a comparable survival as TBI-based conditioning in children with high-risk leukaemia.

Although cancer is a rare disease in children and adolescents, there are 15,000 new cases each year in Europe. More than 60 different types of cancer affect these young patients. Tremendous progress with modern therapies has improved survival and quality of life over the last decade. However, one third of affected children will not survive. SCT is one of the most effective approaches to control leukaemia, but the drawback of this treatment is the risk of severe complications, including infection, organ dysfunction and late complications such as growth retardation, infertility and development of another cancer. Since the first successful bone marrow transplant in Leiden in the Netherlands in 1968, more than 60,000 patients below 18 years have undergone this procedure.

Nowadays, irradiation of the whole body, called total body irradiation (TBI), is still used in conditioning for SCT. “The biggest burdens for children after TBI are the risks of long term complications as secondary malignancies, growth retardation, especially if irradiated below 10 years and infertility, which is most common after irradiation during or after puberty. This is why ALL SCTped FORUM explores the question, if TBI can be replaced by a less toxic combination of different chemotherapies” says Professor Peter Bader from the University Children’s Hospital of Frankfurt am Main, Germany, who co-chairs the ALL SCTped FORUM study. His major goal is to include 1000 children in the upcoming 5 years in this trial.

Peter Bader emphasizes that, “if this trial proves, that total body irradiation can be omitted in stem cell transplantation of these high-risk children, their quality of life could dramatically be improved”.

The EBMT will be part of the Twitter conversation using the hashtag #InternationalChildhoodCancerDay

About the European Group for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT)

The EBMT is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1974 to allow scientists and physicians involved in clinical bone marrow transplantation to share their experience and develop co-operative studies. The EBMT aims to promote all aspects associated with the transplantation of haematopoietic stem cells from all donor sources and donor types including basic and clinical research, education, standardisation, quality control and accreditation for transplant procedures. For further information about the EBMT, please visit the website: www.ebmt.org



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About the EBMT Paediatric Diseases Working Party

This is the biggest scientific network covering all topics on transplantation to develop better strategies for children and adolescents who suffer from life-threatening diseases. Nearly all European transplantation centres which treat children with stem cells (derived from healthy related, unrelated donors or cord blood) are members of the EBMT and register their transplants in a database, thus ensuring access to high quality research and up to date information on recent medical developments.

Press contact

EBMT

Mélanie Chaboissier

Phone : +34 93 453 8570 – E-mail : melanie.chaboissier@ebmt.org