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PT patient perspective

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Radiotherapy is proven to be an essential part of cancer treatment. Until now, the vast majority of cancer patients who were treated with radiotherapy, received X-rays and only a limited number of them, receive radiation from high-energy charged particles. This is still the case, despite the fact that Particle therapy (PT) can deliver higher radiation doses more accurate within the tumor burden, reducing unwanted effects on the surrounding healthy tissues, diminishing the adverse effects of traditional radiotherapy and providing a more efficient treatment for cancer patients. This means that, although more expensive, it can also reduce overall health costs in the long run.

However, all those considerable benefits, the number of cancer patients appointed for PT is very limited and the knowledge and solid clinical evidence is still quite scarce. In addition, the selection of patients who are accepted for PT varies among countries. There are some standard indications where all patients are offered PT, e.g. for pediatric patients, but in many the decisions are based on national or local regulations. As PT is currently more expensive than conventional radiotherapy, it is important that we have solid evidence to justify the viability of its use as well, besides the clinical benefit. One major handicap is the cost of the facilities that can generate the radiation necessary to produce PT. Consequently, the number of centers which provide this therapy is still very limited around the world.

Within this lecture we will try to bring the patient perspective forward and identify what the potential increase of the therapeutic ratio in PT use translates into patients' treatment outcomes and quality of life after treatment. In addition, we will present how access to PT results in treatment inequalities within Europe and what is the role of patient advocates in trying to alleviate them.

We will try as well, to briefly present what patients value the most, when undergoing a specific radiotherapeutic treatment. It is high relevant to provide more information on PT and their access, involving patients in medical decision-making, encouraging them to participate in decisions about their cancer treatment. Proper information about the scientific and clinical evidences on how can PT benefit patients, will empower them as co-creators of their own health.

Summary

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