Clinical Guidance

Paediatric Critical Care: Oncological Emergencies

Summary
Guidance on management of patients who are suffering an oncology emergency.

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This clinical guideline has been produced by the South Thames Retrieval Service (STRS) at Evelina London for nurses, doctors and ambulance staff to refer to in the emergency care of critically ill children.

This guideline represents the views of STRS and was produced after careful consideration of available evidence in conjunction with clinical expertise and experience. The guidance does not override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual patient.

Terms used: G-CSF: granulocyte-colony stimulating factor
PTC: primary treatment centre
GvHD: Graft vs Host Disease

Change History

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Febrile Neutropaenia / Neutropenic Sepsis
- Single oral temperature ≥ 38°C, or signs of sepsis
- Neutrophil count <0.5x10⁹/L / falling / unknown
  (nadir at 5-10 days post chemotherapy)

**High Risk Tumours / Patients**
- Acute haematological malignancies (Leukaemias/Lymphomas)
- Patients with chronic immune suppression
- Indwelling central venous catheter (CVC)

**Presentation and Investigations**
- Typically warm shock; bounding pulses, wide pulse pressure, hypotensive (BUT consider chemotherapy induced cardiotoxicity due to anthracyclines)
- Meticulous examination for focus of infection (incl. mucositis)
- Infection screen: blood cultures (central + peripheral), cultures of indwelling devices & other potential sources, urinalysis, CXR if respiratory signs or symptoms. Urgent blood tests: FBC, coagulation screen, CRP, U&E, LFTs

**Treatment**
- Resuscitation: Usually fluid responsive, average 40-100ml/kg
- Early inotropes (typically require vasoconstrictors)
  1st line peripheral dopamine 5-10μg/kg/min,
  2nd line Noradrenaline,
  (place new central line if indwelling line induces instability)
- Early non-invasive ventilation for cardio-respiratory support
- Intubate if fluid or intravenous resistant shock or coma
  - Ketamine 2mg/kg, Fentanyl 2μg/kg for induction

**Immediate antibiotics within 1 hour**
1) Piperacillin Tazobactam 90mg/kg 6hrly & Gentamicin 8mg/kg daily (level pre-2nd dose).
2) Add Teicoplanin 10mg/kg or Vancomycin 15mg/kg for suspected tunnel/port infection - give through line
3) Meropenem 40mg/kg if suspected meningitis
4) Change Gent → Ciprofloxacin if bone tumour/renal impairment & Tacizin to Ciprofloxacin in penicillin allergy
5) Liposomal Amphotericin for suspected fungal infection
3 m g / k g (max 1mg) test dose then 1mg/kg 1hr later
6) Consider Lenogastrin (G-CSF) – d/w oncologist
7) Consider central line removal if: Refractory shock, falling platelets, bacterial showering during use, persistent positive blood cultures >96 hrs or obvious line tract / port infection – d/w primary treatment centre (PTC)

**Hyperleukocytosis** (WCC >50 x 10⁹)
10-30% leukaemias. AML type M5 = highest risk
At risk of leukostasis/ hyperviscosity syndrome (cerebral/ pulm/ renal infarction or haemorrhage), Tumour lysis syndrome, coagulopathy.

*May need urgent leukapheresis*

**Investigations**
Urgent blood film (+ call on-call haematologist), clotting+fibrinogen, X-match, U&E, urate, LFTS, Ca²⁺, P.O₄⁻, viral serology (VZV, CMV, Hepatitis), LDH, immunophenotyping, CXR

**Management**
- WBC >100x10⁹ or rapidly rising + symptomatic (any neurological / respiratory) = transfer to PICU within 2 hours
- WBC >100x10⁹ + asymptomatic=urgent transfer to PTC with PICU
- WBC 50-100x10⁹ = d/w PTC- elective transfer plus monitor
  - Avoid red cell transfusion if possible. If required, maximum 5mls/kg over 4 hours
  - Accept platelets >30x 10⁹/L unless active bleeding/coagulopathy
  - 0.9% sodium chloride & 5% glucose at 3L/m²/day. NO added K⁺

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**Tumour Lysis Syndrome (TLS)**
Caused by rapid cell death: ↑Urate, ↑potassium (K⁺), ↑phosphate (PO₄⁻), ↓calcium (Ca²⁺) → Renal failure.

**High Risk Tumours/ Predisposing conditions**
- B & T Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma (esp. Burkitt’s Lymphoma), T-Cell ALL
- Large bulk solid disease incl. significant hepatosplenomegaly
- Oliguria, dehydration, renal infiltration or renal failure
- WBC>100 x 10⁹/L
- Highest risk at presentation and up to 72hrs post induction chemo

**Prevention** (Anticipation is key)
- High risk – Rasburicase 200μg/kg/100MHz + hyperhydration 0.9% sodium chloride & 5% glucose (NO K⁺) 2.5-3L/m²/day (caution if renal/cardiac failure) + 8hrly TLS bloods
- Aim urine output >3mls/kg/hr (caution if renal/cardiac failure)

**Treatment**
- Hyperhydrate + rasburicase (as above). 4-6hrly TLS bloods.
- Treat if K⁺ ≥ 5.5mmol/L (see STRS Electrolyte Emergencies)
- Aluminium Hydroxide oral 50-150mg/kg/24h if PO₂≥ 2.1mmol
- Early haemofiltration if: unresponsive high K⁺ & PO₂;<
- symptomatic ↓ica requiring correction if ↓PO₂; established renal failure / fluid overload
- Intubation for cardio respiratory compromise, coma, or vascaoth insertion (ideally CT neck & chest prior to VASCATH insertion)

**Upper Airway / SVC Obstruction**
Compression of airway or great vessels (affecting pre-load or cardiac output) by anterior mediastinal mass (highest risk: NHL + T-cell ALL, thymoma, teratoma)

**Presentation**
- Clinical status DOES NOT reflect degree of obstruction
- Respiratory distress with orthopnoea.
- Neurological signs (headaches, dizziness, syncope) + ↑ ICP
- Cardiovascular compromise

**Management**
- No sedation to avoid worsening obstruction
- Sit up, face mask oxygen, erect CXR +/- drains (Avoid CT – if done, must be prone/lateral + without sedation)
- IV access (femoral if SVC obstruction) + bloods (minimal handling)
- Immediate consultant anaesthetic review
- BIPAP non-invasive ventilation may be well tolerated
- HIGH RISK INTUBATION: Anaesthetic/ PICU consultant decide on timing/intubation method. Consider cardiothoracics+ ENT team – only if life threatening obstruction. In theatre. Use reinforced tracheal tubes
- Dexamethasone or hydrocortisone
- Liposomal Amphotericin or Ciprofloxacin if chest drain
- Tumour lysis syndrome
- Dexamethasone or hydrocortisone
- Remifentanil or sufentanil
- Positive end expiratory pressure
- Suctioning
- No sedation
- No sedation

**Transfuse if:**
- RBCs
  - <70g/L or patient, specific
  - AVOID in hyperleukocytosis
  - <0.3 x Wt (kg) x desired rise in Hb
- Platelet threshold
  - <10 x 10⁹/L
  - <20 + febrile, septic, expected to fall
  - <50 + brain tumour
  - <50 + bleeding, coagulopathy, on heparin, due LP/surgery
  - <100 + life threatening bleeding

**Irradiation (RBCs + platelets)**
(residual lymphocytes can cause fatal transfusion-associated GvHD if severely immunocompromised)
- Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- BMT patients at induction + chronic GvHD
- ≤6 months if blood products in uterus
- Severe T-cell immunodeficiency (SCID, DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)

**CMV status:** d/w PTC – guidelines vary

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**Paediatric oncology centres**
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