Decision Aids

Assisting patients with multiple myeloma and caregivers with treatment decision making

Bojan Kojovic, BS, MSN, RN, and Joseph D. Tariman, PhD, RN, ANP-BC, FAAN

A 52-year-old named S.C., a chief financial officer at a law firm, was referred to a multiple myeloma (MM) specialist at a large academic medical center in the Midwest. He visited his primary care provider because of progressive bone pain in the left hip area for more than two months, and x-rays of the left posterior iliac crest and left femur showed osteolytic lesions concerning for malignancy. Additional diagnostic workup completed by the MM specialist revealed anemia with a hemoglobin of 9.8 mg/dl, normal kidney function with a creatinine of 1.1 mg/dl, no hypercalcemia with serum total calcium level at 9.2 mg/dl, a high immunoglobulin G (IgG) level of 6,520 mg/dl with a monoclonal spike of 5.9 g/dl on serum protein electrophoresis, immunofixation positive for IgG kappa monoclonal protein, and a high beta-2 microglobulin level of 5.8 mg/ml. A bone marrow biopsy showed 60% monoclonal, kappa-restricted plasmacytosis with intermediate cytogenetic risk profile consisting of t(4;14), 1q gain, and high plasma cell S-phase based on the updated Mayo Clinic mSMART guidelines (Mikhael et al., 2013). Magnetic resonance imaging of the skull, spine, and pelvis revealed multiple focal lesions on the frontal bone, lumbar spine, left posterior iliac, and left femoral bones.

S.C. was diagnosed with symptomatic MM requiring therapy. S.C. asked his nurse for available resources on treatments for newly diagnosed MM so he could make an informed treatment decision. Research studies involving individuals newly diagnosed with MM reveal an increasing patient need for information regarding treatment and disease knowledge (Tariman, Doorenbos, Schepp, Singhal, & Berry, 2015), particularly for those who are diagnosed with MM at a younger age (Rood et al., 2015) like S.C. In another study, 19 of 20 older adults newly diagnosed with symptomatic MM wanted to participate in the treatment decision-making process (Tariman, Doorenbos, Schepp, Singhal, & Berry, 2014). With the growing evidence of patient needs for disease- and treatment-related information and patient willingness to participate in cancer treatment decision making (Tariman, Berry, Cochrane, Doorenbos, & Schepp, 2010), providing patients with relevant and meaningful information on MM treatments can empower them to become active participants in shared treatment decision making (Kane, Halpern, Squiers, Treiman, & McCormack, 2014).

A Cochrane systematic review of decision aids (DAs) involving 86 studies revealed that the use of DAs can increase patients’ participation in making decisions, increase knowledge of available treatment choices, enhance clarity in prioritizing what is important to them, and improve their communication with the healthcare team (Stacey et al., 2014).

Review Objectives

The objectives of this integrative literature review are to examine all accessible MM treatment DAs for patients and clinicians and to appraise the strength of evidence supporting these DAs using Melnyk and Fineout-Overholt’s (2011) hierarchy of evidence.