

INITIAL CHEMOTHERAPY IN HEAD AND NECK CANCERS :  
EFFICIENCY AND HARMLESSNESS OF BLEOMYCIN + VEPESID +  
PLATINOL (BVP).

124 patients were given an induction chemotherapy prior to planned radical irradiation or surgery. There were 92 males and 32 females, aged 27-91 (median 59), all recently diagnosed and previously untreated. The predominant sites were : oropharynx (43), oral cavity (28), larynx (27) and hypopharynx (17). Most tumours were locally advanced (16 T1, 27 T2, 51 T3, 26 T4) with frequent lymph node involvement (56 N0, 20 N1, 4 N2, 40 N3). No metastatic patient was included. Squamous cell carcinoma was present in 120 cases.

The chemotherapy regimen consisted of bleomycin (10 mg), etoposide (100 mg) and cisplatinum (15 mg) given on days 1, 3, 5 and 15, 17, 19. Evaluation according to usual criteria indicated an overall response rate of 77% (CR + PR). Primary tumours regressed in 90% (17% CR + 73% PR) and nodes in 55% (13% CR + 42% PR). Side-effects remained acceptable : 85% nausea, 50% vomiting, 10% mild hematologic depression, 20% alopecia but no renal, pulmonary nor cutaneous toxicity. Ancillary treatment consisted of antiemetics, without hydration programm nor mannitol diuresis. BVP chemotherapy was carried out on an ambulatory mode.

Radical surgery was always initiated without undue delay and no adverse effect has been observed on normal tissues. In all cases, irradiation has been given to full dose (TDF 103) with normal tolerance. Complete tumour control was achieved at the very end of radiotherapy in 90% of primary tumours and 60% of lymph nodes.

Up to now, 74 cases are evaluable at one year minimum and the rate of treatment failure only amounts to 30%. This pilot study is still going on and the evaluation of a possible benefit on the long term prognosis will only be ascertained on more cases and a longer follow-up period.