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Neuropsychological evaluation in high grade glioma patients treated with radiotherapy

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Introduction: The diagnosis of high grade glioma has a profound effect on the patient and also his family and there is a clear psycho-oncological involvement. This tumor is characterized by increasing intracranial pressure and consequent neurological deficit related to the tumor site. These deficits can also be exacerbated by eventual surgical removal that is not always possible but definitely desirable. Radiotherapy, chemotherapy and steroid may themselves complicate these issues, involving also metabolic, hematologic and electrolytic imbalances. On the other hand, a diagnosis of brain tumor with its poor prognosis, is classically accompanied by sentiment of suffer, loss of dignity, disability, thoughts of death. This can make diagnostic and therapeutic management more complex for patient and of course for his family.

Aim: The aim of this study was to investigate the possible relation between cognitive impairment and radiotherapy treatment. Also we wanted to determinate the quality of life of patients analyzed before and after treatment. The patients were evaluated by neuropsychological point of view, at the beginning and at the end of radiotherapy, but also we offered a psychological support during the entire course of treatment.

Materials & Methods: 22 patients (14 males and 8 females) underwent psychological testing between December 2011 and July 2013. The tests used were MMSE (Mini Mental State Examination); Clock design; Phonemic Verbal Fluency Test and semantics; Tokens Test; AA Chener Aphasia Test; Span Verbal Words; Rey's Words; Prose Memory; Figure of Rey-B; Trial Making Test; Raven's Progressive Matrices (C.P.M.); EORTC QLQ C30; EORTC QLQ -BN20; HAD (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale).

Conclusions: The hypothesis of the study seems to be disconfirmed by the results observed; in fact radiotherapy does not cause in itself cognitive deficits. Unexpectedly, the analysis showed that the neuropsychological assessment and support offered to patients, in the course of radiation therapy, have helped to increase the compliance of them. In particular it improved their mood, their coping strategies and also their personal assessment about their mental and physical health.

Biography

Carla Perna has been working as Locum consultant in Clinical Oncology at Royal County Surrey Hospital, Guildford, Surrey. She is also a Clinical Research Fellow at University College of London Hospital in Clinical Oncology. Besides she is a Clinical Oncologist in training at "Villa Santa Teresa diagnostica per immagini", Bagheria (Palermo,IT) (University of Palermo, IT)

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