

Living with Cancer

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Survivor of Two Types of Cancer

Living with cancer sucks!

- My mother died last year at age 95. I assumed I'd live as long.
- I retired to travel but cancer has consumed our time and energy.
- Even in remission I must visit clinic often during month.

Personal Information

- 64 years old
- Married 40 years, 3 adult children, 6 grandchildren
- Resident of New Orleans 43 years, and Athens, GA 21 years
- Retired after 39 years as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and adjunct faculty at UGA.
- Faith and prayer are a source of strength.



Family gathering before treatment started in December, 2006

Health History

- Excellent until prostate cancer detected in 2005.
- Played varsity sports in high school, intramurals in college, and continued active exercise as an adult.
- Never smoked. Drink in moderation
- No history of cancer in family.

Cancers

- 2005 – Prostate
- 2006-Present – Multiple Myeloma
- Cases of Cancer
 - Lung cancer – 215, 020
 - Prostate cancer – 186,320
 - Breast cancer – 184,450
 - Colon cancer – 108,070
 - Multiple Myeloma – 16,000

Prostate Cancer

- Primary care physician identified change in prostate during digital exam as part of annual physical.
- Athens urologist confirmed early stage cancer by biopsy. Recommended surgical removal.
- Second opinion at Emory.
- Surgery done at Emory by Dr. Fray Marshall, July 2005.
- Complete success. No trace of cancer.

Multiple Myeloma

- Dr. Farris Johnson, primary care physician, referred me to Athens hematologist in October, 2006.
- Hematologist did bone biopsy and lab work. Diagnosed Multiple Myeloma with “over 80% of blood cells cancerous.” Femurs are hollow.
- Athens orthopedist recommended inserting steel rods in my femurs. Declined surgery.
- Second opinion at U. of Arkansas by Dr. Bart Barlogie in November, 2006. Did an exhaustive series of tests. Bone biopsy with gene array. Lab work required 37 vials of blood. Started treatment Dec. 24, 2006.
- Athens hematologist did not recommend U. of Arkansas – “too aggressive.” Also didn’t have time to answer all our questions. I changed doctors in the same group.



Myeloma Institute for Research and Therapy
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

- 600-700 new myeloma patients per year.
- All treatment done out-patient unless serious complications.
- Generous financial support by Walton family (Wal-Mart) and Tyson family (Tyson Chicken).
- Dr. Barlogie was recruited from M.D. Anderson in late 1980s

What is Multiple Myeloma?

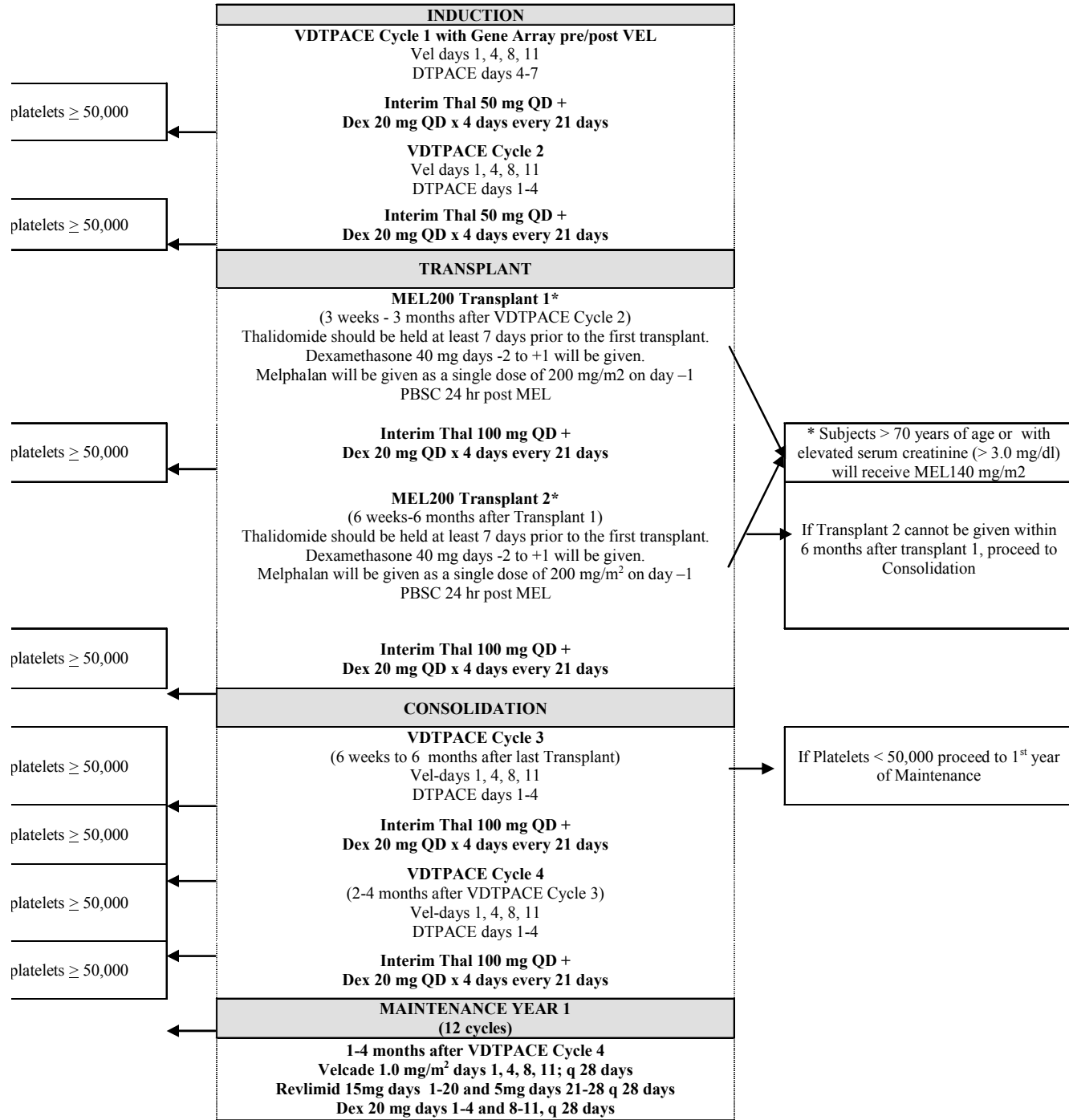
Basic Pathology Concepts of Multiple Myeloma

Multiple myeloma is characterized by malignant plasma cells that reproduce uncontrollably.

Plasma cells are a type of white blood cell that produces and secretes antigen-specific antibodies. (Antigens are substances that are foreign to the body; antibodies are produced naturally by the body to fight off antigens that can cause infection and disease). The malignant plasma cells of multiple myeloma are derived from B-cells (a type of white blood cell produced in the lymphatic tissues and bone marrow) after a number of differentiation and proliferation processes.

Multiple myeloma plasma cells tend to localize within the bone marrow, although they may be found in other parts of the body as well.

UARK 2006-66 SCHEMA





NORTHEAST GEORGIA CANCER CARE, LLC

Dr. Jeffrey Thomas
Athens, Georgia

Home follow-up treatment carrying out the orders from UAMS.
Dr. Thomas is highly supportive of the Arkansas approach.

Medical Insurance

- Fortunate to have good coverage with GA Teachers Retirement (United Healthcare).
- UAMS is “In Network” for myeloma with transplants.
- What do the uninsured or underinsured do?

The Road to Remission

- Six stays of 3-6 weeks each in Little Rock.
- No hospital stays despite pneumonia, C-Diff, and other infections.
- Daily visits to clinic for blood work, sometimes twice a day.
- MIRT is a happy place with lots of laughter and excellent, caring staff.
- Even when home lab work is sent to UAMS and I receive calls concerning issues (e.g. low magnesium).

Two Induction Cycles - included four days of constant infusion of VDTPACE



Induction Cycles also included collection of 20 million healthy stem cells in aphaeresis lab.



Physical Challenges

- Bone biopsies and gene arrays are painful!
- Red blood cell count below normal for two years. Low energy!
- White blood count bounces all over the place, even in Maintenance phase and remission.
- Experienced “rigors” during first stem cell transplant – terrifying uncontrolled trembling.
- Dexamethasone steroid causes swelling, mostly in lower legs. In 5 days gained 25 lbs.
- Now have sleep apnea and must sleep with CPAP machine.

Bald for one year. It's cold in winter without hair!



Psychological Profile

- Self-image as cool, calm, and together.
- Class president in high school.
- Sports team captain.
- President of Athens Area Habitat for Humanity.
- Popular school principal.

Psychological Challenges

- Why me?
- Now take anxiety medication.
- Concern about weak femurs.
- Baldness. I don't like it!
- Loneliness in Little Rock.
- Walker and cane recommended by physical therapist.
- Ports in chest.
- Frequently neutropenic during cycles.
- Staying positive and optimistic. Using positive imaging.

Loss of a Friend



Mike Smith – died of complications from treatment 11/2007

My Lifesaver & Caregiver



Conclusion

- I feel blessed in many ways.
- Progressed from 80% cancer cells to Remission.
- Support and prayers of family and many friends.
- Good insurance.
- Quality medical care at UAMS and Athens.
- Looking forward to long term remission.
- Encouraged by news of promising research toward a cure.

research is important, it's because
millions of survivors like me are
waiting for a cure for our cancer –
or at least to extend our remission
with quality of life.

Questions?