



POST-ASH Issue 1, 2014

**Phase III Trial of Melphalan or
Cyclophosphamide with Lenalidomide/
Prednisone versus Lenalidomide/
Dexamethasone for Newly Diagnosed
Multiple Myeloma**

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CME INFORMATION

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITY

Each year, thousands of clinicians, basic scientists and other industry professionals sojourn to major international oncology conferences, like the American Society of Hematology (ASH) annual meeting, to hone their skills, network with colleagues and learn about recent advances altering state-of-the-art management in hematologic oncology. As such, these events have become global stages where exciting science, cutting-edge concepts and practice-changing data emerge on a truly grand scale. This massive outpouring of information has enormous benefits for the hematologic oncology community, but the truth is it also creates a major challenge for practicing oncologists and hematologists.

Although original data are consistently being presented and published, the flood of information unveiled during a major academic conference is unprecedented and leaves in its wake an enormous volume of new knowledge that practicing oncologists must try to sift through, evaluate and consider applying. Unfortunately and quite commonly, time constraints and an inability to access these data sets leave many oncologists struggling to ensure that they're aware of crucial practice-altering findings. This creates an almost insurmountable obstacle for clinicians in community practice because they are not only confronted almost overnight with thousands of new presentations and data sets to consider but they are also severely restricted in their ability to review and interrogate the raw findings.

To bridge the gap between research and patient care, this CME activity will deliver a serial review of the most important emerging data sets on up-front and maintenance therapeutic options in the treatment of multiple myeloma (MM) from the latest ASH meeting, including expert perspectives on how these new evidence-based concepts may be applied to routine clinical care. This activity will assist medical oncologists, hematologists, hematology-oncology fellows and other healthcare professionals in the formulation of optimal clinical management strategies and the timely application of new research findings to best-practice patient care.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Appraise recent clinical research findings on the efficacy and safety of lenalidomide in combination with low-dose dexamethasone (Rd) as an up-front therapeutic option for elderly patients with newly diagnosed MM, and consider this information for the treatment of patients.
- Compare and contrast the benefits and risks of bortezomib/melphalan/prednisone (VMP) and Rd for elderly patients with newly diagnosed MM when administered in a sequential versus an alternating manner.
- Assess the efficacy and safety of therapeutic regimens containing an alkylating agent versus those that do not for elderly, transplant-ineligible patients with newly diagnosed MM.
- Analyze the extended and updated results from the Phase III HOVON-65/GMMG-HD4 trial of bortezomib during induction and maintenance therapy for newly diagnosed MM, including outcomes of patients with renal failure.
- Evaluate the updated patient survival outcomes from the IFM 2005-02 study and the role of lenalidomide maintenance therapy after first-line autologous stem cell transplantation in MM.

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FACULTY — The following faculty (and their spouses/partners) reported real or apparent conflicts of interest, which have been resolved through a conflict of interest resolution process:

Sagar Lonial, MD
Professor
Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs
Director of Translational Research, B-Cell Malignancy Program
Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology
Winship Cancer Institute
Emory University School of Medicine
Atlanta, Georgia

Advisory Committee and Consulting Agreements: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Celgene Corporation, Lilly, Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Onyx Pharmaceuticals Inc, Sanofi.

EDITOR — Dr Love is president and CEO of Research To Practice, which receives funds in the form of educational grants to develop

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Hardware/Software Requirements:

A high-speed Internet connection
A monitor set to 1280 x 1024 pixels or more
Internet Explorer 7 or later, Firefox 3.0 or later, Chrome, Safari 3.0 or later
Adobe Flash Player 10.2 plug-in or later
Adobe Acrobat Reader
(Optional) Sound card and speakers for audio

Last review date: January 2014

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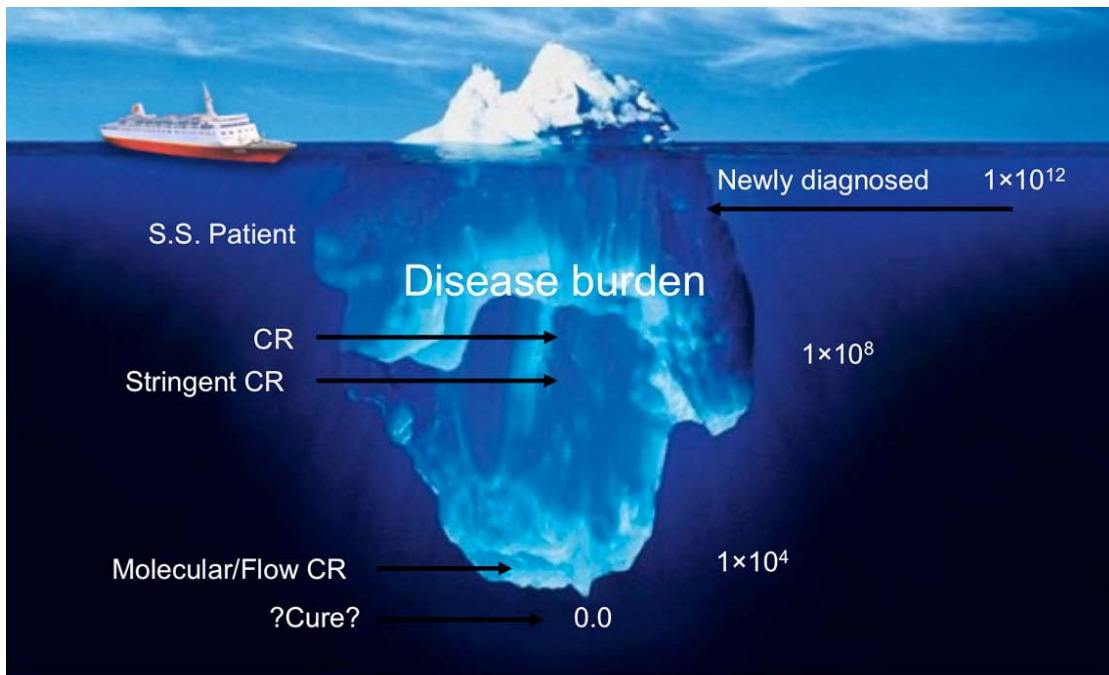
To go directly to slides and commentary for this issue, [click here](#).

The revolution in myeloma therapy engendered by the development of proteasome inhibitors and immune modulatory drugs has not only changed the natural history of the disease but also has led some investigators to adopt a “more is better” treatment goal whereby efforts are made at diagnosis to maximally drive down the tumor burden and keep it suppressed for as long as possible. Dr Sagar Lonial is among the champions of this concept, and last week I chatted with him to further clarify his vision of this paradigm and better understand how it applies to evolving clinical research, especially new data emerging at ASH.



Sagar Lonial, MD

The fundamental idea behind this strategy is perhaps not that much different than what has been hypothesized for many cancers in the past. As depicted by the innovative “iceberg” graphic (see below) that Sagar has been using in many of his recent presentations, the goal is either a diffuse large B-cell lymphoma-like cure or a much longer duration of freedom from disease progression.



Getting to Minimal Residual Disease (MRD). Lonial, S. Reprinted with permission.

Assays to assess MRD are critical to this type of clinical research, and interestingly, Dr Lonial believes that the approach may be far less relevant in the relapsed/refractory setting, where many more mutant tumor clones have developed. The concept of prolonged disease suppression with some type of maintenance is also part of this strategy, and like a number of investigators Sagar often uses a variation of RVD maintenance, particularly in patients with higher-risk tumors.

Many oncologists — myself included — carry a hard-learned skepticism of the “more is better” paradigm from prior research in other tumors, including metastatic breast cancer, where a classic ECOG trial run by Dr George Sledge demonstrated the same survival with combination chemotherapy versus sequential single agents, and an important and vocal segment of myeloma investigators — particularly Dr S Vincent Rajkumar and his Mayo Clinic colleagues — have supported less intensive and better tolerated treatment choices in patients at standard risk. Both groups are committed to cure as a goal, but there is disagreement about what this all means to current practice, and even Sagar believes that with the available therapies a very small fraction of patients might be cured, even functionally, and he is particularly focused on patients with MRD negativity by new flow cytometry techniques along with PET scan normalization.

At the last ASCO meeting, Dr Lonial co-chaired the oral myeloma session and discussed several major up-front trials within the context of the iceberg model. We found his take on the issue to be quite provocative and as such attempted to recreate the format for the first issue of our annual post-ASH roundup. Here is his bottom line on the most noteworthy related oral papers from New Orleans mixed with Dr Lonial’s perspectives:

1. FIRST trial (Phase III): MPT versus 18 months of lenalidomide/low-dose dexamethasone versus continuous Rd until disease progression in transplant-ineligible patients

Perhaps the most visible myeloma story out of ASH was this [largely European trial](#) that was afforded plenary status because in many parts of the world (unlike the US) where MPT is now utilized, this study will likely establish a new standard treatment as these data demonstrate superior PFS and OS in favor of continuous Rd versus MPT. However, perhaps even more relevant was the 38% statistically significant improvement in time to progression (32.5 versus 21.9 months) for continuous Rd as opposed to 18 months, though it may be too early to evaluate OS. This long-term treatment strategy is in keeping with (and may ultimately provide support for) Dr Lonial’s notion to proactively attempt to delay disease progression.

2. Other trials of up-front management

Not surprisingly, [Dr Antonio Palumbo](#) was again on stage at ASH presenting yet another Phase III trial of up-front treatment, this time evaluating Rd versus MPR versus

cyclophosphamide/prednisone/lenalidomide (CyPR) in elderly patients not eligible for transplant. Building off the FIRST trial, all 3 arms of this effort yielded comparable disease-related outcomes in terms of PFS and overall response rates. Of note, patients receiving melphalan experienced more treatment-related toxicity than those receiving cyclophosphamide, and Dr Lonial sees this as one more reason that in myeloma the end may be near for melphalan.

Another important up-front trial — **HOVON-65/GMMG-HD4** — reported more follow-up at ASH. This study, which had previously demonstrated an advantage to bortezomib with doxorubicin/dex induction therapy followed by bortezomib maintenance versus vincristine with doxorubicin/dex followed by thalidomide maintenance, continues to yield a PFS and OS benefit for the bortezomib-based regimen, and the update provides further support for the use of this proteasome inhibitor in patients with renal failure and adverse risk factors. The study used a bortezomib maintenance schedule of 1 dose every other week for 2 years, but Dr Lonial notes that subcutaneous maintenance bortezomib may be even more patient friendly, and oral proteasome inhibitors such as ixazomib and oprozomib might further facilitate this strategy.

Finally, a paper by **Mateos et al** investigated the novel induction strategy of alternating Rd with VMP in elderly patients. Although Dr Mateos and her colleagues conclude that the alternating scheme is superior in efficacy versus the sequential approach, it is difficult to compare this regimen to the 3- and 4-drug combinations currently used in practice. In keeping with his intent to achieve rapid and deep responses even in older patients (with tolerable regimens), Dr Lonial favors the combination approach.

3. More data on lenalidomide maintenance

Of the 3 major Phase III trials of len maintenance, two — CALGB-100104 and the Italian MM-015 study — have demonstrated a survival benefit, and this led to a major shift in US practice. However, the **third study** from the French IFM group (IFM 2005-02), which was updated at ASH, continues to show a substantial PFS benefit without improvement in OS. In discussing this data set, Dr Lonial noted that part of this discrepancy may be related to the IFM 2005-02 trial's design, in which all patients received 2 months of post-transplant lenalidomide consolidation, including those randomly assigned to "no maintenance." Another critical difference is that the IFM stopped len maintenance treatment at 2 years as opposed to indefinite therapy until disease progression/toxicity in the other 2 studies.

Also at ASH we saw findings from a **meta-analysis** of lenalidomide maintenance, demonstrating a PFS and OS benefit. However, Dr Lonial found it difficult to dissect out the relevance of this data set because it included patients who did and did not receive a transplant. The study did, however, provide some additional insight about the incidence of second primary cancers, which to this point appears to be mainly a modest risk of hematologic neoplasms, including AML and MDS.

Although the “more is better” investigators have focused on current regimens with approved agents, it is likely that completely different classes of drugs will be required to melt away substantially more of the iceberg, and in another myeloma issue in this series we will attempt to pick out the agents farthest along in this desperate race, including monoclonal antibodies and filanesib — a fascinating kinesin spindle protein inhibitor reported at ASH by Dr Lonial’s group to cause responses (as a single agent and with low-dose dex) in patients refractory to conventional agents. Next on this series, an ASH CML update including the current status of ponatinib.

Neil Love, MD

Research To Practice

Miami, Florida

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Phase III Trial of Melphalan or Cyclophosphamide with Lenalidomide/Prednisone versus Lenalidomide/Dexamethasone for Newly Diagnosed Multiple Myeloma

Presentation discussed in this issue

Palumbo A et al. **A randomized Phase 3 trial of melphalan-lenalidomide-prednisone (MPR) or cyclophosphamide-prednisone-lenalidomide (CPR) vs lenalidomide plus dexamethasone (Rd) in elderly newly diagnosed multiple myeloma patients.** *Proc ASH 2013*; **Abstract 536.**

Slides from a presentation at ASH 2013 and transcribed comments from a recent interview with Sagar Lonial, MD (1/22/14)

A Randomized Phase 3 Trial of Melphalan-Lenalidomide-Prednisone (MPR) or Cyclophosphamide-Prednisone-Lenalidomide (CPR) vs Lenalidomide plus Dexamethasone (Rd) in Elderly Newly Diagnosed Multiple Myeloma Patients

Palumbo A et al.

Proc ASH 2013; Abstract 536.

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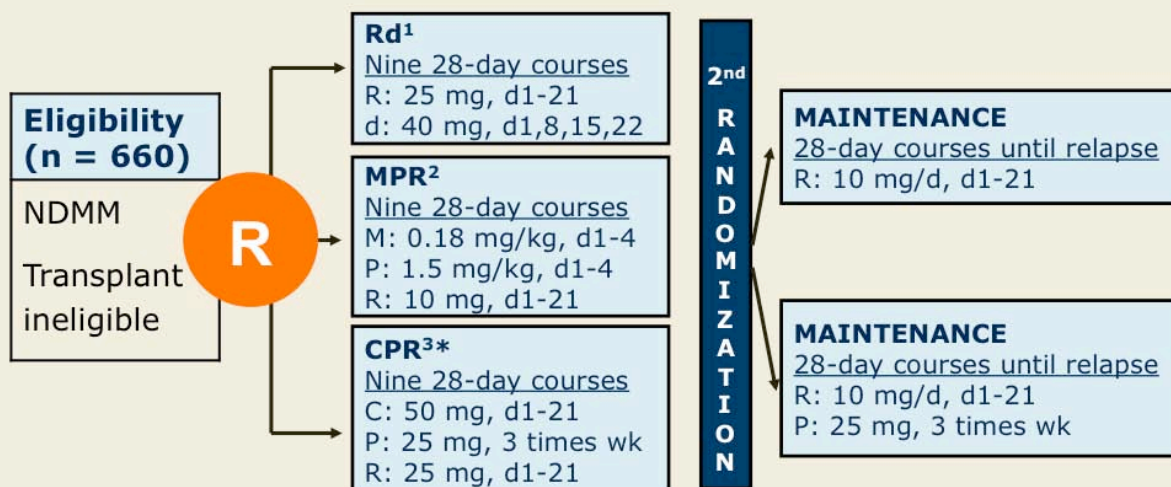
Background

- Rd and MPR are effective treatments for patients with newly diagnosed multiple myeloma (NDMM).
- Lenalidomide-based therapies involving 3-drug combinations have reported greater efficacy — complete response (CR) rates and median progression-free survival (PFS) — compared to 2-drug combinations for patients with NDMM (*Lancet Oncol* 2010;11(1):29; *N Engl J Med* 2012;366(19):1759; *Am J Hematol* 2011;86(8):640).
- Rates of hematologic toxicities are greater with such regimens including melphalan.
- **Study objective:** To compare the efficacy and safety of a nonalkylating agent-containing regimen (Rd) to that of alkylating agent-containing regimens (MPR/CPR) in elderly transplant-ineligible patients with NDMM.

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH* 2013;Abstract 536.

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Phase III Study Design



>75 years: ¹Dexamethasone 20 mg/wk; ²Melphalan 0.13 mg/kg; ³Cyclophosphamide: 50 mg qod, d1-21

* 59 patients on the CPR arm received a lower dose of lenalidomide (10 mg) and cyclophosphamide (50 mg eod)

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH* 2013;Abstract 536.

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Patient Characteristics

	CPR (n = 222)	MPR (n = 217)	Rd (n = 220)
Median age, years (range)	73 (64-87)	74 (63-81)	73 (50-89)
>75 years	36%	40%	38%
ISS stage			
I	27%	28%	28%
II	46%	45%	45%
III	27%	27%	27%
Chromosome abnormalities t(4;14) or t(14;16) or del 17	22%	24%	25%
Frailty*			
Fit	44%	41%	44%
Unfit	32%	36%	26%
Frail	24%	23%	30%

* Frailty defined according to age (<75/75-80/>80 years), Charlson score ($\leq 1/\geq 2$), ADL ($>4/\leq 4$) and IADL indices ($>5/\leq 5$)

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH 2013*;Abstract 536.

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Best Response Rate

	CPR (n = 220)	MPR (n = 210)	Rd (n = 211)
Complete response	5%	12%	8%
\geq Very good partial response	25%	29%	32%
\geq Partial response	72%	73%	74%

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH 2013*;Abstract 536.

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Survival

Overall survival	CPR	MPR	Rd
2-year overall survival	84%	81%	80%

Rd vs MPR: HR = 0.954; $p = 0.82$
 Rd vs CPR: HR = 1.033; $p = 0.88$

PFS	CPR	MPR	Rd
2-year PFS	50%	54%	48%
Median PFS*	24 mo	27 mo	22 mo

* Rd vs MPR: HR = 1.189; $p = 0.20$
 Rd vs CPR: HR = 1.032; $p = 0.81$

Median follow-up = 26 months

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH* 2013;Abstract 536.

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Survival: Age ≤75 Years

Overall survival	Hazard ratio	p -value
Rd versus MPR	1.285	0.42
Rd versus CPR	1.125	0.69

PFS	Hazard ratio	p -value
Rd versus MPR	1.38	0.07
Rd versus CPR	1.08	0.64

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH* 2013;Abstract 536.

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Survival: Age >75 Years

Overall survival	Hazard ratio	p-value
Rd versus MPR	0.954	0.82
Rd versus CPR	1.033	0.88

PFS	Hazard ratio	p-value
Rd versus MPR	1.189	0.20
Rd versus CPR	1.032	0.81

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH 2013*;Abstract 536.

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Select Grade 3-4 Adverse Events (AEs)

	CPR	MPR	Rd
Neutropenia	28%	65%	25%
Thrombocytopenia	9%	18%	7%
Infection	7%	12%	9%
Second primary malignancy (SPM)	1%	3%	1%

- Incidence of Grades 3 and 4 anemia and peripheral neuropathy was highest in the MPR arm
- Discontinuation due to AEs: CPR (16%); MPR (23%); Rd (15%)
- Dose reduction of lenalidomide or alkylating agent was most frequent in the MPR arm

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH 2013*;Abstract 536.

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Author Conclusions

- In this community-based population of elderly patients with NDMM there were no major differences among response rates and long-term outcomes among the 3 treatment arms.
- Toxicities were more prominent with the combination containing melphalan, including:
 - Higher rates of SPM
 - Higher rates of discontinuation due to AE
- Among the CPR and Rd combinations there were no significant differences with regard to hematologic toxicities or infection.
- Rd is probably the well-defined treatment for all elderly patients with NDMM.
- Combination therapy with cyclophosphamide can be considered for fit elderly transplant-ineligible patients with NDMM.

Palumbo A et al. *Proc ASH* 2013;Abstract 536.

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Investigator Commentary: A Randomized Phase III Trial of MPR or CPR versus Rd for Elderly Patients with NDMM

If you evaluate the 3 arms on this trial, the overall response rates and median PFS were essentially equivalent. So if you had to pick a “winner,” it would be the Rd regimen because it is easier on the patients than either of the 3-drug regimens evaluated on this trial. However, if the patient needs an alkylating agent, cyclophosphamide is preferable to melphalan because we saw fewer AEs overall and fewer hematologic toxicities with cyclophosphamide.

I believe this report to be yet another piece of evidence that it’s the beginning of the end for melphalan, which is currently used much less commonly in the United States than in Europe, where it is used almost exclusively for older patients. At any rate, the take-home message from this trial is that if you need to use an alkylator, use cyclophosphamide rather than melphalan.

Interview with Sagar Lonial, MD, January 22, 2014

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