

The Importance of Cardio-oncology

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Cardio-oncology is an emerging field of today medicine. This term may be familiar to some people but it is unknown for many others. There has been a rapid increase of cardio-oncological clinics worldwide. Although it is not accompanied by comprehensive scientific data that established guidelines of cardiotoxicity handling.

Cardiotoxicity is defined as any adverse event that affect the heart function derived from pharmacological treatments or radiotherapy. Cancer and cardiovascular diseases are connected by multiple pathophysiological mechanisms and share risk factors. Classically, heart failure was the main focus of attention. The development of targeted therapy have generated wide spectrum of vascular toxicities. Radiotherapy has been associated with an increased risk of early atherosclerosis in vascular structures included in the radiation field, mediated by endothelial dysfunction, inflammation and oxidative stress. Long term effect of such treatments have generated a subgroup of cardiovascular patients. The treatment of oncological patients with cardiovascular comorbidities represents a challenge and requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Scientific evidence also advocates for cooperation among oncologists, hematologists and cardiologists. Cancer patients have a cardiovascular mortality risk at least two-fold compared to general population. In addition, all cancer patients with or without a history of heart disease, are included in stage A of the America College of Cardiology/AHA Classification of Heart Failure.

Patients to monitor by the cardio-oncology team are clustered in three categories:

- Patients with no history of cardiovascular disease who may receive a potentially cardiotoxic onco-specific treatment.
- Patients with a history of cardiovascular disease who may receive a potentially cardiotoxic onco-specific treatment.
- Cancer survivors with late onset of cardiovascular disease due to previous exposure to cardiotoxic onco-specific treatment.

Cardiovascular prevention strategies play a significant role in defining oncologic treatment, diminishing the frequency of cardiovascular events and preservation of patient's life.

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