

Cancers in Pregnancy: A 10 Year Case Series

Background: Cancer during pregnancy is uncommon but its incidence is increasing.¹ Whilst this is partly due to increasing maternal age at the time of pregnancy, there has also been an increased incidence of age-adjusted malignancy.¹ Given the low incidence of cancer during pregnancy, there is limited data on its management however treatment is often delayed to the second and third trimesters of pregnancy due to the teratogenic effects of the modes of therapy in the first trimester.²

Objective: This study aims to examine the characteristics of women with cancer in pregnancy and to review the oncological and obstetric management of these women.

Design & Method: The study is an observational retrospective cohort study performed across Liverpool Hospital and Westmead Hospital which was conducted via the review of electronic and paper medical records of female patients who were diagnosed with cancer during pregnancy or diagnosed with pregnancy during active cancer between 2010 and 2021. Basic statistical and descriptive analyses were performed.

Results: 28 patients were identified. The median age at the time of cancer diagnosis and pregnancy was 32 years (range 26-41). The most common cancers were breast cancer (35.71%, n=10), lymphoma (17.86%, n=5) and cervical cancer (14.29%, n=4). 1 patient (3.57%) opted for termination of pregnancy following diagnosis of cancer, 1 patient (3.57%) died from cancer complications during pregnancy resulting in fetal death at a previable gestational age of 19 weeks, and there were no other fetal or neonatal deaths. There was one twin pregnancy. 14 patients (50%) underwent chemotherapy from the second trimester of pregnancy. The median gestational age at time of delivery was 36 weeks + 6 days. Of the 15 babies who were delivered preterm (55.55%), 13 of those (86.67%) were iatrogenic and timed for maternal reasons. 8 babies (29.63%) required NICU admission and 7 babies (25.93%) were small for gestational age. 18 patients (64.29%) were cured of cancer or underwent remission from cancer. 9 patients (32.14%) had disease progression or recurrence following pregnancy.

Conclusions: This data shows that only 64.29% of patients were younger than 35 years of age. Chemotherapy was the most common treatment given in pregnancy with 50% of patients receiving chemotherapy after the second trimester. It was encouraging to see that the median gestational age of delivery was 36 weeks + 6 days but there is room for improvement with an aim to reduce the iatrogenic preterm delivery rate.

References

1 Incidence and outcomes of pregnancy-associated cancer in Australia, 1994-2008: a population-based linkage study. International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

2 Chemotherapy against cancer during pregnancy. Medicine.

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