

These recent results demonstrated some advantage for patients treated with GO. In addition, induction mortality was not increased in these studies. Efficacy was observed, typically in patients with favorable risk, and sometimes in intermediate risk. The reason for this has not been elucidated. Molecular analyses concomitant with clinical outcome data will be needed to address this in the future.

Doses of GO and anthracyclines differed in these studies. From the recent studies, 3–6 mg/m² of GO for 1 day and 50–60 mg/m² of DNR for 3 days may be chosen. Ongoing and future studies may help to demonstrate the optimal dosage of these agents in combination chemotherapy including GO.

Low-dose AraC (LDAC, 20 mg, twice a day) was administered randomly with or without GO (5 mg) in 495 elderly patients with AML [91]. GO improved OR rate, but not OS, at 1 year. Improvement of OS in elderly AML remains a challenge for treatments, including GO.

GO for pediatric AML

Reports of results from pediatric patients treated with GO remain relatively limited. Twelve children with relapsed/refractory AML received GO (1.8–9 mg/m² at 2-week intervals for 1–2 doses) [92]. Five children responded to treatment with blast reduction, but no child achieved CR. One patient treated GO after HSCT developed reversible VOD.

Seventeen children with relapsed/refractory AML received GO (3 mg/m² on days 1, 4 and 7) plus AraC (100 mg/m² for 7 days) (GOCYT), and seven of these received GO-based consolidation [93]. The OR rate was 35 and 53 % after induction therapy and consolidation therapy with GO, respectively. VOD was not observed.

Thirty children with AML, who were refractory to re-induction at first relapse, received GO (7.5 mg/m² at 2-week intervals for 1–2 doses) [94]. The OR rate was 37 %, and 3-year OS was 27 %. Grade 3–4 bilirubinemia and transient transaminitis were observed in one and two cases, respectively.

Twenty-nine children with relapsed/refractory AML received GO (6, 7.5 or 9 mg/m² at 2-week intervals for two doses) [95]. In 13 (45 %) of them, GO was administered after HSCT. The OR rate was 97 %. Grade 3 or 4 bilirubinemia and transaminitis were observed in 7 and 21 %, respectively. VOD was observed in seven (26 %) patients, six of whom had received HSCT.

A group of 230 children with untreated AML were treated with high-dose (18 g/m²) or low-dose (2 g/m²) AraC, DNR and ETP (ADE; induction 1), followed by ADE with or without GO (ADE; induction 2) [96]. ADE plus GO was shown to be feasible. CR was achieved in

80 % after induction 1, and 94 % after induction 2. The 3-year EFS and OS were 63 and 71 %, respectively.

In the Children's Oncology Group (COG)-AAML00P2 trial, the maximum tolerated dose (MTD) of GO in combination with AraC and MIT, and with AraC and l-asparaginase was analyzed, and was concluded to be 3 and 2 mg/m², respectively [97].

A group of 350 children with previously untreated AML were enrolled to the COG-AAML03P1 [98]. GO (3 mg/m² on day 6 of the first course) was administered with chemotherapy with DNR, AraC, and ETP. The CR rate was 83 % after the first course. The mortality rate after the first course was 1.5 %. The 3-year EFS and OS rates were 53 and 66 %, respectively.

The Nordic Society of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology (NOPHO)-AML 2004 trial estimated post-consolidation effect of GO (6 mg/m² at 3-week intervals for two doses) in children with AML. Of a total of 120 patients randomized, 59 received GO [99]. GO was well tolerated, but the relapse rate, median time to relapse, the 5-year EFS and OS were not different between the two groups.

Given these equivocal results, the efficacy of GO in children with AML remains uncertain.

In vitro efficacy of GO for APL

In our in vitro study, GO showed equivalent effects on ATRA and/or ATO-resistant APL cells unless they expressed P-gp [100]. The cell lines used in our study are NB4, ATRA-resistant NB4 (NB4/RA), P-gp-positive NB4 and NB4/RA (NB4/MDR and NB4/RA/MDR) and ATO-resistant NB4 (NB4/As). GO did not exhibit cross-resistance with ATRA- and ATO-resistance. GO is likely useful for induction therapy after resistance to these drugs has been acquired.

Relapsed and recurrent APL

While ATRA combined with chemotherapy has been the standard treatment for patients with APL, approximately 20 % undergo relapse [101–103]. Several salvage therapies, including Am80, ATO, and stem cell transplantation, have been introduced for the treatment of APL [104, 105]. GO was also administered to APL, and the successful use of this therapy has been reported for patients with newly diagnosed or relapsed APL [106–108].

Several ideas have been proposed to explain the efficacy of GO for APL [100, 109]. First, a large amount of CD33 is commonly expressed on the surface of APL cells. Second, the level of P-gp on the surface of APL cells is lower than that of AML. Third, APL cells are highly sensitive for free calicheamicin.

Several investigators have reported the clinical efficacy of GO for patients of relapsed APL (Table 5). Lo-Coco et al. [107] reported that 14 of 16 patients with molecularly relapsed APL achieved molecular remission (MR) after GO monotherapy (6 mg/m² at 2-week intervals for three doses). Of 14 responders, seven (50 %) remained in sustained MR for a median of 15 months. GO was administered again in two patients with relapse, and both obtained a new MR.

We treated patients, who were in a third morphologic relapse with a considerable number of APL cells, by GO monotherapy (9 mg/m² on days 1 and 15). They developed prominent DIC after GO treatment [108]. Both patients achieved CR. One of the patients was treated with consolidation chemotherapy, but the other was not. Both patients had a considerably long remission period. GO may represent another treatment option if stem cell transplantation is not being considered in the near future. Treatment with GO may transiently increase the severity of DIC, as APL cells collapse rapidly.

Aribi et al. [109] reported the efficacy of a combination therapy consisting of ATO, ATRA, and GO in eight patients with APL in first recurrence. Patients were treated with ATO until CR, and then received the consolidation therapy including ATO, ATRA and GO (9 mg/m²) once a month for 10 months. The second CR was longer than the first CR in 75 %. All patients achieved MR. There were no grade 3 or 4 non-hematological toxicities.

GO (3–6 mg/m² for two doses) was administered in three elderly patients with APL who had molecular relapse and were deemed unfit for intensive chemotherapy [110]. All of the patients achieved second MR, and did not relapse. The study suggested that low-dose GO is effective to treat MR in elderly APL patients.

In a Japanese post-marketing study of GO for APL, whose results were partially described in the previous section [76], remission duration of first CR and number of relapses influenced CR rates, but previous usage of ATO did not. Treatment-related adverse events (grade 3 or 4) in APL were similar to those seen in AML. GO may be more effective in APL compared to AML, and relatively safe in relapsed/refractory APL.

These reports show that GO is effective for APL patients with molecularly relapsed and advanced relapsed forms of the disease. These data also support the use of GO treatment for newly diagnosed APL.

Newly diagnosed APL

In the US study, 19 newly diagnosed patients with APL were treated with GO (9 mg/m²) [106]. Patients received eight additional courses (once every 4–5 weeks) of GO and

ATRA after CR was achieved. GO was shown to be feasible. CR and MR were achieved in 84 and 74 %, respectively. All patients tested during the study were PCR-negative 2–4 months from CR.

In another study, 19 untreated patients with high-risk APL were treated with GO (9 mg/m² on day 1) in addition to ATRA plus ATO as induction therapy [111]. Fifteen (79 %) out of 19 cases achieved CR, three cases relapsed. The authors suggested that GO was still effective for high-risk APL treated with ATRA and ATO.

In a third study, 82 newly diagnosed APL patients were treated with ATRA, ATO and GO [112]. The first cohort included 65 patients, who received ATRA followed by ATO. GO (9 mg/m² on day 1) was administered in high risk. The second cohort included 17 patients, who received ATRA and ATO simultaneously. GO (9 mg/m²) was added on high risk or increase of WBC count above $30 \times 10^9/L$ during induction. CR was achieved in 95 and 81 % cases with low-risk and high-risk APL, respectively; 3-year OS was 85 %. The addition of GO to ATRA plus ATO may represent a promising initial therapy for high-risk APL.

Larger clinical studies of GO for the treatment of relapsed/refractory APL are warranted to obtain clearer clinical evidence. The results may suggest how GO will be integrated into the management of APL. The Japan Adult Leukemia Study Group (JALSG) has also launched prospective studies for APL that include GO.

GO has introduced a new perspective into the treatment of AML. However, the second evaluation of this treatment did not yield positive results. Recent studies have shown the efficacy of GO in AML, with favorable risk in APL as well. Subsequent evaluations should focus on the efficacy of GO in core binding factor (CBF) leukemia and its mechanism of action, which may lead to the re-approval of GO.

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