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THE IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF PET-CT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HODGKIN LYMPHOMA IN LEBANON

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Context • Hodgkin lymphoma (HL) is a highly curable disease; more than 90% of patients achieve long term survival. PET-CT has played a major role in the evaluation of both disease staging and response, it has become an essential component in the tailoring of the treatment.
Objective • To report the impact of integrating PET-CT in the management of HL patients in Lebanon.
Methods • We analyzed the data regarding the usage of PET-CT at diagnosis, during treatment (Interim PET) and at the end of treatment along with the findings of the PET-CT since 2009 till 2015.
Results • The first PET-CT was introduced in Lebanon in April 2002, but it wasn't used for the evaluation of HL. Late in 2009, we started to incorporate PET-CT in the treatment of HL but by that time only 28.6% of patients had a PET-CT at diagnosis. Whereas in 2010, we noticed an increase in the use of PET-CT: 65% of patients had a PET-CT at diagnosis ($p = 0.0001$). 66% of patients had a PET-CT at the end of treatment by 2010. The usage of CT at diagnosis has dropped significantly from 92.9% prior to 2009 to 54.4% after 2010 ($p = 0.0001$). We also observed in patients with advanced HL a decrease in the usage of 8 cycles of ABVD protocol from 9.5% in 1990-1999 to 5.9% in 2000-2009 to 4.5% in 2010-2015 ($p = 0.5$).
Conclusion • Functional imaging techniques are gaining popularity over anatomical imaging. The usage of PET-CT has emerged as a highly valuable staging and follow-up method in the treatment of HL 8 years after the introduction of PET in Lebanon, it was used at first to improve the staging, then to evaluate response to treatment and recently for tailoring therapy according to response.

Keywords: PET-CT, Hodgkin lymphoma, interim PET, PET-CT timing

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