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978-0-521-88423-5 - Chronic Graft Versus Host Disease: Interdisciplinary Management

Edited by Georgia B. Vogelsang and Steven Z. Pavletic

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CHRONIC GRAFT VERSUS HOST DISEASE: INTERDISCIPLINARY MANAGEMENT

Chronic graft versus host disease (GVHD) is the most common complication of allogeneic bone marrow transplantation. Because of the protracted clinical course of chronic GVHD, transplant centers and hematology/oncology offices are inadequately equipped to manage these immuno-incompetent patients with a multisystem disorder. Practitioners need to be able to recognize and effectively manage chronic GVHD as a late effect of more than half of allogeneic transplantations. The text is oriented for the clinician, with chapters covering staging, organ site and system-specific manifestations, treatment options, and supportive care. Drs. Georgia B. Vogelsang and Steven Z. Pavletic have been pioneers in the recognition of the multiorgan complexity of this disease and have gathered the input of a variety of subspecialist physicians for this book. This book fills the gap in practical literature on chronic GVHD, providing a comprehensive, up-to-date, and clinically relevant resource for anyone who deals with cancer patients posttransplant.

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PREFACE

Bone marrow transplantation has changed remarkably from its earliest days. Patients were transplanted with bone marrow as a last resort for refractory leukemia or aplastic anemia. The transplant procedure required prolonged hospital stays – often months – with significant uncontrolled toxicities from the preparative regimen, limited antimicrobial success, and even more limited ability to prevent or treat acute graft versus host disease (GVHD). The lucky survivors now marvel at how different the experience is for patients receiving allografts as outpatients.

Unfortunately, the same level of improvement has not been seen in chronic GVHD. The reasons for this lack of success are varied – including the latency of chronic GVHD, lack of accepted readily reproducible animal models, and complex underlying immuno-pathology. It is no wonder that patients with this affliction felt like abandoned stepchildren.

Over the last 5 years, there has been both a resurgence of interest and progress in chronic GVHD. To a significant degree, the NIH-sponsored Consensus Conference on Chronic GVHD is responsible for this change. This conference suggested working definitions, standardized staging and response criteria, recommended supportive care measures, and suggested areas for future study. Although the indolent nature of the disease means that clinical progress is going to be time consuming, there has been remarkable progress since the initial NIH-sponsored meeting. One of the main lessons learned is that it is imperative to have transplant centers cooperate in studying

this disorder. The success of NIH-sponsored multicentered trials, cooperative group-sponsored clinical studies, Clinical Trials Network proposals, and cooperation of European transplant groups all suggest that a new era has begun in which more patients will be intensely studied.

Our hope with this book is to provide a solid reference for this effort. By collecting in one book the state of the art, our hope is that it will provide a reference that will be valuable in many settings, including transplant clinics, oncology/hematology clinics, specialty clinics, and basic research laboratories. It is only by gathering all these diverse groups together that we are going to be able to understand the basic immunologic processes responsible for the disorder and to provide treatment to relieve the discomfort caused to the patients suffering with this disorder.

We wish to thank all those who have made this book possible. The book grew out of the NIH-sponsored Consensus Conference on Chronic GVHD – all participants in that meeting contributed to this book, whether or not they actually penned a chapter. Their thoughts and their efforts played a major part in the final Consensus Conference recommendations. Obviously, we are indebted to all of the contributors. Most of the chapters are group efforts and reflect the cooperative spirit that has made such a profound difference in the hope for the future for this disorder. Finally, we are indebted to our patients, who have waited many years for a book concerned with and dedicated to the burden they live with every day.