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EMBMT

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
BLOOD AND MARROW
TRANSPLANTATION

NEWSLETTER

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A word from the Editor, Mouhab Ayas, MD



In a newsletter, the space allotted for the editor's word does not allow for extensive academic reviews, the content however has to be interesting enough to compel the reader to peruse it; so writing this column has been a stimulus for me to think about the many issues that surround stem cell transplantation in our corner of the world.

One issue that seems pertinent to the goals of EMBMT is to start seriously thinking for participating centers to establish an observational database such as those maintained by the Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research (CIBMTR) and the European Blood and Marrow Transplant group (EBMT). The outcome of stem cell transplantation is influenced by many factors such as stem cell source, conditioning regimens, and underlying disease and many of the rare illnesses treated with transplantation are relatively more common in this part of the world because of many cultural factors, the homogeneity of the population and hence consanguinity. So, establishing an EMBMT database may facilitate understanding of the transplant outcome in such diseases and the observational studies may eventually lead the way to clinical trials and multicenter collaboration to improve outcome.

A wise man once said: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step", and certainly a stem cell transplant database for EMBMT could begin with the collection of a limited amount of data on selected diseases, and this may be the nucleus for a larger database in no time.

I strongly recommend that this topic be discussed thoroughly in the next business meeting in Dubai.

Medical News:

Lupus nephritis (LN) is a common major organ manifestation of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality. The most widely and classically used immunosuppressive therapies, notably corticosteroids and cyclophosphamide (CYC), have led to a significant improvement in survival over the last few decades and decreased the progression to end-stage multiorgan failure. Both agents, however, are associated with significant side effects including increased susceptibility to infection.

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) are multipotential non-haematopoietic progenitor cells capable of differentiating into multiple cell lineages including osteoblasts, chondrocytes, myoblasts, adipocytes, endothelial cells, neuron-like cells, cardiomyocytes and hepatocytes. Because of their low immunogenicity due to their lacking expression of costimulatory molecules, they are able to escape alloantigen recognition. In addition, MSCs can inhibit immune responses in vitro and in vivo in a dose-dependent, non-human leucocyte antigen (HLA)-restricted manner. These properties make MSCs promising candidate cells for preventing rejection in organ transplantation and treatment of autoimmune disease.

In the literature, there have been strong indications in the last few years that autoimmune diseases are 'stem cell disorders'; some have showed functional abnormalities in bone marrow-derived MSCs (BM-MSCs) from patients with SLE. We refer the reader to a couple of recent articles that suggest that allogeneic or even cord blood derived MSCs may result in amelioration of disease activity in animal models and in humans.

Therapeutic Effects of Umbilical Cord Blood-Derived Mesenchymal Stem Cell Transplantation in Experimental Lupus Nephritis. Cell Transplantation 2011;20(2):245-57.

Allogeneic mesenchymal stem cells transplantation in refractory systemic lupus erythematosus: a pilot clinical study. Ann Rheum Dis 2010;69:1423-1429

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6th EMBMT Business meeting was held in Paris on 4th April 2011 in conjunction with the EBMT annual Congress and was a tremendous success. It was attended by participants from several member countries and numerous important issues were discussed. Dr. El Solh chaired the meeting with Dr. Ghavamzadeh. After welcome remarks and introduction of participants, minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed, discussed and approved unanimously. Dr. El Solh thanked Dr. Ghavamzadeh and all Board members for their superb support and dedicated service over the years. Dr. El Solh stated that he completed the first term as Chairman of the Board of Directors and in order to give other members the opportunity to contribute at the leadership position he decided not to renew for the 2nd term. Dr. Ghavamzadeh will be the interim Chairman as of next Business meeting in Nov 2011 until the next election in Nov 2012. An update of the EMBMT website, Newsletter and organizational e-mail were presented by Dr. Hussain. Participants were informed about the forthcoming HSCT Quality Management training to be held at the Grand Hyatt in Dubai from 29 June - 1 July 2011 by JACIE. Data management training opportunities and establishment of centralized registry for the member countries was discussed. Dr. Aljurf provided an update on the WBMT and our close collaboration. Several new proposals were presented and discussed by the working committees including a new phase III randomized multi-center trial to compare the Cyclophosphamide+G-CSF vs., Etoposide+G-CSF for peripheral blood progenitor cell mobilization for patients with multiple myeloma by Dr. Saloua Ladeb from Tunisia, which was unanimously approved. This protocol is in development phase and will be distributed to all the member centers shortly for review, feedback and submission to the relevant IRBs. Several ongoing and future publications were also discussed. The Business Meeting concluded with dinner following closing remarks by Dr. El Solh, after the nursing presentation by Ms. Belkhedim and the plans for the EMBMT Scientific Meeting to be held in Dubai in spring, 2012 were discussed.

[Memories in Paris](#)

**AHCTA in the EMBMT** By: Kathy Loper

The Alliance for Harmonization for Cellular Therapy Accreditation (AHCTA) began as an effort to harmonize standards for cellular therapy donor and product applications. The group is composed of various standard setting organizations and its projects are posted on www.ahcta.org

Volunteers from each organization work on projects to advance the mission and help advance practices. Participating organizations are listed on the home page and past projects include a position paper entitled, "Towards a Global Standard for Donation, Collection, Testing, Processing, Storage and Distribution of Allogeneic HSC and Related Cellular Therapies," a series of "crosswalk" documents comparing various standards, and a WMDA hosted survey on import/export requirements categorized by country. AHCTA has also developed a listing of resources for reference. This page includes sample procedures, educational programs and other useful tools. <http://www.ahcta.org/resources.html>

AHCTA has recently become one of the official committees of the WBMT, a collaboration between professional organizations and the World Health Organization. www.wbmt.org As a WBMT committee, AHCTA serves to develop resources and programs for new programs and developing healthcare systems. The current projects focus on developing a consensus or best practices for the training of collection staff for HPC, Apheresis and HPC, Cord Blood products. The group is also assisting with the planning of a meeting in Vietnam this October. The meeting announcements may be found on the WBMT website. Essential elements of a quality program and the value of accreditation programs will be discussed as well as the role of health care ministries in the development of a stem cell transplantation program. A scientific program will accompany the workshop which is currently limited to invited guests from 18 countries.

1st EMBMT JACIE Quality Management Training Course

EMBMT has organized the 1st JACIE Quality Management Training Course from 29th June to 1st July 2011, at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai, UAE. The course is fully sponsored by the EMBMT for the participants from each member country. The attendees were nominated and selected by the country representative on the EMBMT Board of Directors. This course is approved for 15 CME credit hours by the Saudi Central Board for Accreditation of Health Institutions (CBAHI) and the SCFHS on successful completion of the course.

The purpose of this Quality Management Training is to enhance the understanding of the participants in QM, to provide the necessary skills to build, implement and evaluate a QM System, to enhance participants ability to think analytically about the further maintenance and development of a Comprehensive QM System and to facilitate the ability to use and develop existing and maintain the QM System. It is geared to help prepare member institutions to achieve JACIE accreditation for their HSCT programs in the EMRO region.

[Please check the website for more details](#)



Stem cell transplantation in Iran.

Amir Ali Hamidieh , MD
 Director of the pediatric stem cell transplantation unit
 Institution: Shariati Hospital

The Hematology-Oncology Research Center and Stem Cell Transplantation (HORCSCT) is affiliated with Teheran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) and is based in Shariati Hospital, Teheran, Iran. As a main national hematology-oncology center, it is among the most prominent stem cell transplantation centers in the world, with more than 350 transplantations performed per year. The Center was founded in 1991 by Prof. Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh, who is currently the Center director.

The Pediatric stem cell transplantation unit was established as separate unit in 2007 and is located at the HORCSCT. Previously, only older children with Thalassemia or Leukemia were transplanted in the adults' units. As soon as the pediatric unit was founded, children of all ages got the opportunity to be transplanted. At this time, even infants less than 4 months of age are also transplanted in this unit.

We perform stem cell transplantation for different categories of malignant diseases and non-malignant hematologic, primary immunodeficiency and congenital metabolic diseases.

Currently, more than 100 cases of pediatric stem cell transplantation (95% of which Allogeneic) are performed at this center annually, in addition to different research activities and studies.

In addition to matched related SCT, we now perform unrelated cord blood transplantation for a variety of pediatric diseases, using dual cord blood units for transplantation when indicated, we are also using radioisotopes (MIBG) in conditioning regimes for some diseases. Additionally, haploidentical transplantation is also performed at our center. In addition to clinical and research activities, pediatric stem cell transplantation unit is active in training Pediatric Hematology-Oncology fellows.

It is our hope that this unit that started year ago with 7 beds and now has 11 active beds will be able to assist not only Iranians but also many of the children in the Middle East who require transplantation.

Please review your membership profile by visiting the membership directory at www.embmt.org. If you would like to update any information, please complete and return the new membership form to EMBMT Secretariat by email at irene.paat@embmt.org or Fax to +966-1-442-3941. Forms can also be down loaded from the website.



The Hematology-Oncology Research Center and Stem Cell Transplantation (HORCSCT)



Prof. Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh
 Founder & Center Director,
 HORCSCT



IMPORTANT DATES

MEETING/TRAINING	DATE	VENUE
KERTEZA QM Training	Jun 29 - Jul 1 '11	Dubai, UAE
EMBMT Business Meeting	Nov. 16 - 17 '11	Dubai, UAE
CIBMTR/SBMT	Feb. 1 - 15 '12	San Diego, CA
EMBMT Scientific Meeting	March 7 - 9 '12	Dubai, UAE
EBMT Business Meeting	April 1 - 4 '12	Geneva, Switzerland

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The Paris experience and the burden of proof

By: Reggie Belkhedim, RN



Walt Disney once said, "If you can dream it, you can do it."

The Paris experience epitomized these words as it was one of the momentous events for the Eastern Mediterranean Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EMBMT) nursing group. From a simple wish and a spark of hope, the group has achieved what it has dreamt of – becoming an international nursing group within the dynamic European Group for Bone and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT) Nursing Group.

This year, EBMT conference was held in Paris, France. Paris has a special flavor for me being one of the most beautiful capitals in the world. Knowing this particular city, I felt so eager to share its beauty and magnificence with my colleagues and friends who were visiting the place for the first time. I was so happy to read in their faces how pleased they were with our exploration of the wonderful metropolis. But beneath the fun and enjoyment, a different air of anticipation prevailed in each member as we looked forward to the moment of getting our recognition as an international nursing group.

For the EMBMT Nursing group, the Paris experience was enriching as much as it was rewarding. It was a landmark for us as it was the first official meeting of all EMBMT Nursing group and we had the privilege of having it incorporated within the EBMT congress, there were enough representations from at least 10 countries.

Our group felt so welcomed. We were graced by the presence of the EBMT Nursing group president, Arno Mank. We saw the gladness from the EBMT President upon meeting the group as well as feeling their expectations on the endeavor we have taken. Until finally, we got what we have been dreaming of – the announcement of being officially recognized as a regional nursing group within a prestigious international organization such as the EBMT.

The success of our trip can be attributed to the tremendous support, contributions and active involvement of the dedicated members. Due to limitation of space to mention them all, I will give my

acknowledgments to these deserving staff in our website. In the meantime, allow me to cite a few of my colleagues who even deserve more than just commendations.

I would greatly acknowledge is *Ms. Amal Barnawi*, Nursing Program Director at KFSH&RC-East Wing. She gave her all-out support arranging and organizing meetings for our cause. She has been actively representing us in international meetings on behalf of KFSHRC nursing group. Her contributions were countless and for that I would like to thank her from the bottom of my heart.

Needless to say, *Ms. Amal Mohamad*, Pediatric BMT Coordinator in KFSH&RC is one of the most prominent persons who had worked so hard for EMBMT. In whatever capacity and at all times, she was always there. She deserves our deep gratitude.

I would like to mention valuable people like *Dr. Fazal Hussain*, Supervisor of the Research Unit in Oncology Centre of KFSHRC. In him I found a friend who was always willing to listen and lighten the difficulties I faced when EMBMT nursing group was in its conception. I am extremely grateful for his magnanimity.

Last but not least, I could appreciate enough the relentless support I received from *Drs. Hassan El-Solh and Mahmoud Aljurf*, whom I personally consider as mentors.

Having said all these, the long wait is now way past over but our journey has just started. As one anxious member remarked, "there is a big responsibility ahead of us in the face of the great expectations and enormous amount of work to be done to prove our worth." With courage and determination we are facing our apprehensions head-on and we have come out with goals and objectives for the coming year which will be based on:

- Cross training for nurses and BMT coordinator as well as quality manager
- 1 or 2 surveys to be conducted within the EMBMT region
- To promote all aspect of patient care, academic & Research
- 29th June we will start our 1st JACIE Quality Management Training Course in Dubai. All EMBMT Members having 1—3 members of each country were invited to attend.

On my way back to Riyadh from the congress, I couldn't help but be drowned in mixed emotions between happiness and pleasant anxiety - for achieving what we have wished for...and yet having the burden of proof that we can deliver.

[Nursing Link](#)