Progressive improvement in cutaneous and extracutaneous chronic graft-versus-host disease after a 24-week course of extracorporeal photopheresis--results of a crossover randomized study.

In a prior multicenter randomized controlled trial, we found that a 12-week course of extracorporeal photopheresis (ECP) plus standard immunosuppressive therapy resulted in several beneficial outcomes in patients with corticosteroid-refractory/integer/dependent chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD). Here, we report the results of an open-label crossover ECP study in 29 eligible participants randomized initially to the standard of care non-ECP (control) arm. Eligible for the crossover ECP study were control arm patients who either (1) had progression of cutaneous chronic GVHD (cGVHD), defined as >25% worsening from baseline as measured by the percent change in the total skin score (TSS) at any time, or (2) had less than 15% improvement in the TSS, or had a <50% reduction in corticosteroid dose at weeks 12 and 24 was observed. Extracutaneous cGVHD response was highest in oral mucosa with 70% complete and partial resolution after week 24. In conclusion, progressive improvement
in cutaneous and extracutaneous cGVHD was observed after a 24-week course of ECP in patients who previously had no clinical improvement or exhibited worsening of cGVHD while receiving standard immunosuppressive therapy alone in a randomized study. These results confirm previous findings and support the notion that prolonged ECP appears to be necessary for optimal therapeutic effects in corticosteroid-refractory cGVHD patients.

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