

The challenge of soft tissue sarcomas—critical aspects of therapies with curative intent

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Despite several advances, the treatment of soft tissue sarcomas can still be regarded as a clinical challenge. The main reasons for that are the paucity of randomized phase III trials, the rareness of the disease and the requirement for a close interdisciplinary cooperation as to achieve optimal treatment results. As a consequence, in daily practice, many difficult-to-answer questions arise during the treatment of these patients concerning the different steps that have to be taken.

Alluding to that, in November 2013, we convened for a symposium dedicated to several of these questions at the University Hospital Innsbruck. Due to the positive feedback of the participants of this meeting, the editors of *MEMO* asked me to serve as a guest editor and to provide the information presented at this respective symposium to a broader audience by asking the speakers to summarize their main messages within a short article.

Thanks to the efforts of all the authors, we today are able to offer the readers of *MEMO* three articles with high impact for daily practice.

First, Perathoner et al. [1] refer to the most important aspects of the optimal surgical treatment of retroperitoneal soft tissue sarcomas. As in most areas of sarcoma-oncology, the limited availability of randomized trials hampers the evidence-based approach to important clinical questions in surgery, too. With regard to that, the authors discuss important issues as the need for preoperative histologic diagnosis and the extent of surgery.

Second, Sztankay A. [2] summarizes the basic principles, theoretical advantages and practical issues related to the concept of intraoperative radiotherapy (IORT) to

improve local control in the treatment of soft tissue sarcomas. Within his article, he also provides us with a comprehensive review on the literature comparing IORT with conventional external beam radiotherapy that led to the acceptance of IORT as an important part of multimodality treatment.

Third, Wöll E. [3] covers the concept of neoadjuvant chemotherapy. Due to the high rate of distant recurrences seen in high-grade soft tissue sarcomas and the low efficacy of adjuvant systemic therapy, the question, whether neoadjuvant chemotherapy could be more effective, is brought up repeatedly. Discussing the available evidence very carefully, the author states that neoadjuvant chemotherapy can definitely not be declared a treatment standard, but very reasonably points out that the concept may be worth further studies or even be considered for use in highly selected patients outside of clinical trials.

In conclusion, I would once again like to express my gratefulness to all the authors who contributed with their work to this *MEMO*-Special article series and hope that the readers will find the information provided helpful for their daily practice.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there exists no conflict of interest.

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