Pelvic Cancer Associated Lymphedema

Elliott Weiss MD FRCPC
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
June 25th, 2011
Objectives

- Differentiate between arm and leg lymphedema
- Review the functional differences between arm and leg involvement
- Review diagnostic and treatment considerations

Disclosures: None
Arm/Upper Extremity Cancer Associated Lymphoedema

- Primarily associated with carcinoma of the breast and/or its treatment
- Potentially associated with head/neck malignancies
- Related to impaired lymphatic flow or direct tumor involvement
Pelvic/Lower Extremity Cancer Associated Lymphoedema

- bowel, bladder, rectal, prostate, vulva, vagina, cervix and endometrial carcinomas
- Seen in Hodgkins and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- Either directly related to tumor invasion into the lymphatics, and/or
- Treatment induced (surgical, radiotherapy)
Treatment Associated Lymphoedema

- Pelvic lymphadenectomy
- Radiation induced
- Secondarily associated with acute/chronic infections, lymphoceles
- Can produce isolated pelvic or leg lymphoedema
Early versus Late Onset Post-Surgical Lymphoedema

- Early onset is usually due to surgical disruption of the pelvic lymphatic system although local tumor invasion needs to be considered.

- Late onset is usually considered to be due to the combination of surgical disruption to the lymphatic channels (early) and post-radiation fibrosis (late); tumor recurrence needs to be considered.
Functionally Speaking;

ARM versus LEG involvement
Arm Lymphoedema

Unique Arm issues:
- dominant vs. non-dominant arm
- hand involvement
- heaviness, pain,
- capsulitis, contractures, nerve damage as collateral damage
- cosmesis
Pelvic Lymphoedema

- Cancer associated local issues:
  - Colostomy or altered bowel functioning
  - Urostomy or incontinence
  - Skin integrity
  - Lymphorrhea: usually pelvic/vaginal
  - Lymphoceles (intrapelvic)
  - Neuropathy
  - Etc.
Leg Involvement

- Mobility: standing, walking, sitting
- Comfort: weight, pain/discomfort/thermal
- Skin integrity/fragility/leakage/ulcers etc.
- Clothing: underwear, size/fit (especially in very asymmetrical limbs)
- Footwear
- Hygiene including feet, toes
- Fitness
Cosmosis/Comfort and Function
Diagnosis and Treatment

- Prevention/early diagnosis and treatment of malignancies (tumor screening)
- Education in high risk populations
- Surveillance and early intervention
- Prevention of complications (i.e. infection)
- Long-term Compliance
Thank You