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Adjuvant Colon Cancer

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Complete Response of HER-2/neu Amplified, Metastatic, Heavily Treated Colon Cancer to Dual HER-2/neu Inhibitory Therapy

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Background: Over-expression of HER-2/neu receptor is sometimes seen in cancers of gastrointestinal origin. There has been very limited published experience in treating the rare cases of HER-2/neu overexpressed/amplified colon cancer with anti-Her-2/neu therapy.

Methods: Our patient was diagnosed with stage IIIC adenocarcinoma of the transverse colon in 2002 at the age of 34. She underwent tumor resection and adjuvant 5-fluorouracil (5-FU) and leucovorin for 6 months. Within 6 months of completion of chemotherapy, she presented with metastatic disease to the ovaries. She underwent surgical debulking and FOLFOX for 6 months. A few months later she developed metastatic disease to the left hilum and was treated with FOLFIRI/Avastin for 6 months, along with radiation to the left hilum, to which she responded very well. A year later she developed a recurrence in her left lung and underwent left pneumonectomy with curative intent. She was then treated with XELOX/Avastin intermittently until mid 2008 when she developed a metastatic lesion in her right middle lobe. She was then treated with irinotecan and cetuximab after her tumor was found to be negative for KRAS mutation. After only three cycles of treatment, she developed brain metastases and was treated with whole brain radiation. Soon thereafter, her right lung metastasis increased in size and number, with new metastatic celiac axis and para-aortic lymphadenopathies. At this point, excisional biopsy of a right lung met was performed and submitted to genomic profile using microarray. The tumor had amplification of the HER-2/neu gene at the ratio of 8. The patient received a combination of trastuzumab and lapatinib.

Results: After 2 months of therapy with this regimen, restaging PET/CT scan showed practically a complete response in chest and abdomen, with minimal toxicity.

Conclusion: Based on the reported effect of anti-HER-2/neu therapy on the outcome of HER-2 overexpressed gastric and GE junction cancer patients, the remarkable response in our reported case, and the fact that 10% of all GI cancers show HER-2 overexpression, we are recommending HER-2/neu testing in GI cancer patients.