



Case series

Combined immunotherapy and radiation for treatment of mucosal melanomas of the lower genital tract[☆]



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 March 2016

Received in revised form 6 April 2016

Accepted 10 April 2016

Available online 14 April 2016

Keywords:

Gynecologic mucosal melanoma

Vaginal melanoma

Cervical melanoma

Ipilimumab

Immunotherapy

Radiation therapy

ABSTRACT

Objective: To report our experience using ipilimumab, a monoclonal antibody targeting CTLA-4, combined with radiation therapy in women diagnosed with mucosal melanoma of the lower genital tract.

Methods: We retrospectively identified all patients who received ipilimumab with concurrent radiation treatment of mucosal melanoma of the lower genital tract at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center from 2012 to 2015. Various clinicopathologic data and treatment response were abstracted and analyzed.

Results: Four patients were identified. Median age was 61.5 years (range 44–68); 3 were diagnosed with vaginal melanoma, 1 with cervical melanoma. All would have required extensive surgical procedures to remove entirety of disease. Median size of lesions was 4.7 cm (range, 3.3–5.3); all were Ballantyne stage I. Median number of doses of upfront ipilimumab was 4 (range, 3–4). Two patients suffered CTCAE grade 3 adverse events (colitis, rash). All received external beam radiation: 3 to 3000 cGy, 1 to 6020 cGy. Post-radiation surgical resection was performed in 3 patients (75%); 1 (33%) of 3 patients achieved complete pathologic response. Complete local radiographic response was observed in all patients after completion of initial therapy and surgery. Two developed recurrence at 9 and 10 months post-diagnosis (mediastinum, lung); 2 remain disease-free at 20 and 38 months. **Conclusions:** Mucosal melanoma of the lower genital tract is rare, and data-driven treatment strategies limited. Immunotherapy has demonstrated durable efficacy in the treatment of cutaneous melanomas. Our small case series shows a favorable response to combined ipilimumab and radiation therapy. Larger studies are needed to validate these promising results.

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1. Introduction

Mucosal melanoma accounts for approximately 1.4% of all melanomas diagnosed in the United States (Mihajlovic et al., 2012). The subset of mucosal melanoma localized to the lower genital tract (LGT) constitutes a small percentage of these rare tumors. The Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results database noted only 644 cases of vulvar melanoma from 1973 to 2003 (Sugiyama et al., 2007). Thirty-seven cases of newly diagnosed vaginal melanoma were reported at MD Anderson Cancer Center over a similar time frame (1980–2009)

(Frumovitz et al., 2010). Cervical melanoma is the rarest of these tumors, comprising 3–9% of all diagnosed mucosal melanomas of the LGT (Pusceddu et al., 2012; Myriokefalitaki et al., 2013). Survival for patients with this rare malignancy remains poor. A recent study from our institution reported 5-year overall survival (OS) rates of 60% for patients with vulvar melanoma and 20% for those with vaginal melanoma, in a cohort of 118 patients (Leitao, 2014).

Given the rarity of mucosal melanoma of the LGT, much of the data regarding treatment and care has been extrapolated from larger studies that include cutaneous and mucosal melanomas of varied origin. The mainstay of treatment for these tumors is primary surgical resection, with the goal of achieving negative margins (Garbe et al., 2010). However, this goal is often difficult to achieve in melanomas of the LGT due to close approximation of tumor to vital anatomic structures such as the bladder and rectum. Attempting to obtain negative margins through an exenterative type of procedure is not recommended in this

[☆] This study was funded in part through the NIH/NCI Support Grant P30 CA008748.

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setting, as many studies have demonstrated that radical surgery confers no survival benefit (Leitao, 2014; DeMatos et al., 1998a; Brand et al., 1989). Exploration of preoperative treatment with chemotherapy and/or radiation to circumvent the need for extensive surgical resection has been limited (Leitao et al., 2014). Standard chemotherapeutics such as dacarbazine, which are FDA-approved for use in advanced cutaneous melanoma, show limited activity in the metastatic setting, and trials of neoadjuvant chemotherapy for patients with resectable melanoma indicate that they are no more likely to respond than those with stage IV disease (Shah et al., 2010). Radiation treatment has customarily been used in the palliative setting for women with advanced, symptomatic disease (Huguenin et al., 1998).

More recently, the role of immunotherapy in cutaneous melanoma has been explored, with favorable results (Larkin et al., 2015; Robert et al., 2011; Hodi et al., 2010). A 2010 phase 3 study investigating the use of ipilimumab—a monoclonal antibody that blocks cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated antigen 4 (CTLA-4)—in patients with previously treated metastatic melanoma demonstrated a nearly 4-month OS advantage as compared to a peptide vaccine alone (Hodi et al., 2010). Recent literature has also pointed to a potential modulation of the immunotherapeutic effect of CTLA-4 blockade with concomitant radiation (Postow et al., 2012; Twyman-Saint Victor et al., 2015). In this case series, we report on our experience using combined ipilimumab and radiation in the treatment of women diagnosed with mucosal melanoma of the LGT.

2. Methods

After Institutional Review Board approval, we retrospectively identified all patients at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center who received ipilimumab with concurrent radiation for treatment of mucosal melanoma of the LGT between 2012 and 2015. Review was based on data collected from outpatient, operative, and radiation oncology notes. Demographic data collected included age, race, body mass index (BMI), documented comorbidity, and genetic mutational status. Initial date of diagnosis and pathologic tumor features were noted. Use of ipilimumab and number of doses received, as well as radiation treatment and dosage, were captured. Retrospective toxicity grading was as per the Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (CTCAE) version 4.0 (NCI 2009).

Treatment response was graded as per RECIST guidelines version 1.1, and retrospectively reviewed (Eisenhauer et al., 2009). A complete response (CR) was defined as disappearance of all target lesions, with any pathological lymph nodes demonstrating a reduction in short axis to <10 mm. Partial response (PR) was characterized by a minimum 30% decrease in the sum of diameters of target lesions, taking as reference the baseline sum diameters. Stable disease (SD) was defined as neither sufficient shrinkage to qualify for PR nor sufficient increase to

qualify for disease progression. Definition of response as CR, PR, or SD was establishable only if no new lesions arose during treatment. Recurrence of disease was based on pathologic or radiographic evidence. OS was measured from date of initial diagnosis until date of death or until most recent known status in patients who were still alive at the time of data collection.

3. Results

Four patients with mucosal melanoma of the LGT treated with concurrent ipilimumab and radiation were identified (Table 1). Three patients were diagnosed with vaginal melanomas, and 1 patient was diagnosed with a cervical melanoma (Fig. 1).

3.1. Patient A

Patient A is a 44-year-old Caucasian female who initially presented with vaginal discharge. She was found to have a 4.7 cm, nearly completely circumferential vaginal tumor encompassing the right-upper and mid vagina, precluding primary surgical resection. No distant disease was noted on imaging at time of initial diagnosis. Biopsy confirmed a Ballantyne stage I vaginal melanoma. Genetic testing was negative for mutations in BRAF, NRAS, or c-KIT. Patient A received treatment with 4 doses of ipilimumab at 3 mg/kg, delivered intravenously every 3 weeks. The treatment course was complicated by a CTCAE grade 3 generalized maculo-papular rash, which responded to outpatient therapy with topical and oral steroids; and a CTCAE grade 1 diarrhea. Concurrent treatment with external beam radiation (EBRT) was given to a dose of 3000 cGy in 5 fractions. Post-treatment imaging after completion of EBRT demonstrated SD. The patient underwent surgical resection with a partial vaginectomy 33 days after completion of EBRT. Final pathology revealed no evidence of disease in the surgical specimen, and postoperative imaging showed no evidence of residual disease. Patient A subsequently received maintenance ipilimumab every 12 weeks for 1 year at an outside institution. No recurrence of disease was noted at 38 months of follow-up.

3.2. Patient B

Patient B is a 68-year-old Asian female who initially presented with vaginal bleeding. She was found to have a 3.3 cm multifocal vaginal lesion. Pathology was consistent with a Ballantyne stage I vaginal melanoma. No distant disease was noted on imaging at time of initial diagnosis. Genetic testing revealed no mutations in BRAF, NRAS, or c-KIT. Patient B received 4 doses of ipilimumab with no complications, followed by EBRT to 6020 cGy in 28 fractions. Imaging after completion of initial treatment demonstrated a partial radiographic response. Fifty-seven days post-radiation, surgical resection with wide local excision was

Table 1
Clinicodemographic summary of patients with melanoma of the lower genital tract.

	Patient A	Patient B	Patient C	Patient D
Primary site	Vagina	Vagina	Vagina	Cervix
Age	44	68	61	62
BMI	20.4	23.7	24.4	26
Pathology IHC staining	Melan-A, MITF, HMB-45	MITF, HMB-45	Melan-A, MITF, HMB-45, tyrosinase	Melan-A, HMB-45, S100
Ipilimumab doses	4	4	4	3
Radiation therapy	EBRT 3000 cGy	EBRT 6020 cGy	EBRT 3000 cGy	EBRT 3000 cGy
Post-Ipi/RT imaging	SD	PR	CR	SD
Surgical resection	Vaginectomy	WLE	n/a	Hysterectomy, BSO, vaginectomy
Post-op imaging	CR	CR	CR	CR
Recurrence	No	Yes	No	Yes
Vital status	NED	DOD	NED	AWD

BMI = body mass index, IHC = immunohistochemistry, Melan-A = melanoma antigen, MITF = microphthalmia-associated transcription factor, HMB-45 = human melanoma black 45, EBRT = external beam radiation therapy, Ipi = ipilimumab, SD = stable disease, PR = partial response, CR = complete response, WLE = wide local excision, BSO = bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy, NED = no evidence of disease, DOD = dead of disease, AWD = alive with disease. All patients had a documented local CR postoperatively.

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