

Toxicities of Radiation Treatment for Breast Cancer

Jean L. Wright
Editor

Toxicities of Radiation Treatment for Breast Cancer

Risks and Management Strategies

 Springer

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I would like to dedicate this book to all of our patients who have bravely managed the side effects of radiation therapy for breast cancer and to all the clinicians who work to minimize and manage these toxicities for our patients.

Preface

As a physician, I have always been interested in how to balance the risk of toxicity related to our treatment recommendations versus the potential benefits. In breast cancer, in particular, I found that this risk-benefit assessment plays into almost every treatment decision and that “gray zone” cases, where there is no clear-cut management pathway, make up the majority of the cases I see. The decision tree has innumerable branches: whether to treat at all, what to treat (whole breast? partial breast? low axilla? supraclavicular nodes? internal mammary nodes? and so on), and how to treat (compromise coverage of internal mammary nodes to reduce cardiac dose? prescribe to a higher isodose line to avoid a hotspot? utilize tissue equivalent bolus in a reconstructed chest wall?). Each branch of this decision tree requires a balanced assessment of risk versus benefit.

In light of the daily challenges we all face in optimizing this balance for our patients, I submitted a session to ASTRO’s annual meeting in 2017 called “Late Toxicity of Radiation for Breast Cancer: Overblown or Under-Appreciated?” and had the opportunity to chair the session. In that session, we focused on four management issues from the perspective of late toxicity: cardiac toxicity, lymphedema, impact of radiation on reconstruction, and second malignancy risk. And in preparing for that session, I became all the more aware of the magnitude of this topic and the many toxicities, both acute and late, which we did not have time to address in that session.

After the session was accepted, I was approached by the staff of Springer to inquire whether this topic might be suitable for a textbook, a question to which I readily answered “Yes!”

This book, then, has its origins in that 2017 ASTRO educational session and is an expansion of the four topics we addressed then into a longer list of both acute and late toxicities associated with radiation therapy for breast cancer. The book represents an attempt to compile a comprehensive list of all of the different types of toxicities that we encounter in managing our breast cancer patients. I sought out authors with published experience in their topic and was extremely fortunate to be able to assemble a team with expertise, experience, writing skills, and willingness

to contribute. I am very grateful to all of the authors of this work for their time and hard work in putting together this book. Together, we hope that this work proves a valuable resource to clinicians in radiation oncology clinics who care for our patients.

The book is primarily directed toward radiation oncology physicians, physician extenders (who are more and more often providing long-term follow-up for our patients), and nurses. I hope it may also be of use to other providers who see our patients during and after radiation treatment including medical oncologists and primary care physicians, as well as other members of our clinical teams who help to manage our patients.

In addition to the authors of this work, I would like to thank the staff of Springer, who provided so much support during this process, including Margaret Moore and Rekha Udaiyar.

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