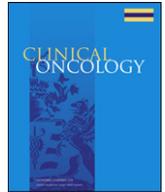




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Overview

Clinical Application of Image-guided Radiotherapy in Bladder and Prostate Cancer

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Abstract

Advances in radiotherapy planning reduced the volumes of irradiated normal tissue and allowed safe dose escalation in prostate cancer. Image-guided radiotherapy solutions to prostate and bladder cancer offer further improvements. The initial process is understanding the causes and extent of internal organ motion, followed by development of equipment and protocols to minimise geographical miss. Further refinements may allow margin reduction and further dose escalation. This paper reviews these issues for bladder and prostate cancer.

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Key words: Bladder cancer; IGRT; image-guided radiotherapy; internal organ motion; prostate cancer

Statement of Search Strategies Used and Sources of Information

Both authors independently searched MEDLINE using technique-specific terms up to 11 January 2010. Further papers were extracted from the references of papers identified from this MEDLINE search strategy.

Introduction

There has long been an awareness of the need to add margins around the clinically demonstrable tumour to account for diagnostic uncertainties, microscopic spread, subclinical disease and uncertainties inherent in the radiotherapy delivery process. This overview focuses on the clinical perspectives of recent technological advances that attempt to compensate for the internal organ motion that occurs during radiotherapy for bladder and prostate cancer. Advances in planning, such as three-dimensional conformal radiotherapy (3D-CRT) and intensity-modulated radiotherapy (IMRT), have reduced the volume of normal tissues

irradiated by increasing treatment conformality, which has led to reduced rates and severity of radiation toxicities [1]. Further advances are achievable through improved target volume delineation and increased accuracy of treatment delivery. The latter may allow a safe reduction in clinical target volume (CTV) to planning target volume (PTV) margins, reducing toxicity further. Radiotherapy for both bladder and prostate cancer requires consideration of significant degrees of internal organ motion. Standard practice has been to use population-based data; however, there is much ongoing research into the use of individually defined margins, with further research looking into adapting initial volumes/margins as information accrues during each patient's treatment. This paper reviews issues associated with internal organ motion for bladder and prostate cancer.

Bladder Cancer

Introduction

Bladder cancer is a comparatively uncommon tumour, affecting 8470 patients in England during 2005. There is a relatively poor prognosis, with 3883 dying in the same period in England, reflecting the aggressive tumour biology, often advanced stage at presentation, elderly age and/or

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multiple co-morbidities. For patients with muscle-invasive disease, radical radiotherapy offers equivalent long-term outcomes to cystectomy [2,3] and allows functional organ preservation in about 75% of long-term survivors [4]. Patients may relapse at the site of the primary tumour, at other sites within the genito-urinary tract, in pelvic lymph nodes or with distant metastases. Some patients thought to have localised disease at the time of radical therapy will already have subclinical metastatic disease.

Standard practice within the UK has been to irradiate the whole bladder plus margin in a single phase. The whole bladder is usually defined as the CTV as disease may be multifocal, although there is no proven role for radiotherapy for non-invasive disease [5]. A recent randomised trial showed that partial bladder irradiation (gross tumour volume [GTV] plus margin) could allow moderate dose escalation, with only 7% of patients relapsing within the bladder [6]. Defining the GTV in this setting is challenging, as it may not be well visualised on cross-sectional imaging, especially after trans-urethral resection. There is an uncertain role of pelvic nodal irradiation, although the surgical literature suggests an improved outcome with extended pelvic lymphadenectomy [7].

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy with a cisplatin-containing regimen has been shown to improve 5 year survival rates by about 5%. It is hoped that concurrent chemoradiation may improve outcomes further. Despite complete response rates in the order of 70%, long-term survival rates remain between 50 and 60% [8,9]. We are presently unable to routinely select treatment modality on an individual basis, although some centres use the response to neoadjuvant chemotherapy or chemoradiation, which is integral to the SPARE study [10]. There are hopes that molecular biology analyses may be useful in this respect in the future.

Computer tomography/positron emission tomography with (11)C-choline, which is not excreted in the urine, shows encouraging preliminary results for the identification of residual muscle-invasive disease after trans-urethral resection and pelvic nodal metastases of 10–15 mm [11,12].

The critical normal structures during whole bladder radiotherapy are the bowel, rectum and, to a lesser extent, the bladder itself [3,10,13,14]. The bowel often lies in direct apposition to the bladder, especially at the dome, so the magnitude of margins applied to the CTV directly affects the volume of bowel within the high-dose region. Henningsohn *et al.* [14] reviewed quality of life in 71 patients irradiated between 1977 and 1995; the results were compared with a population control sample of 310 patients. Irradiated patients had an increased relative risk of ‘much’ or ‘moderate’ distress from bowel toxicity of 3.4 and from urinary function of 1.9.

It has been known for many years that bladder volume changes during radiotherapy can cause large variations in the shape and position of the bladder, leading to geographical miss [15]. Furthermore, changes in rectal filling may lead to positional, but not conformational, changes [16–18]. The magnitude of the effect of rectal filling is significantly less than that of bladder filling.

Conventionally, relatively large population-based isotropic margins of 15–20 mm are applied to the CTV to avoid geographical miss, but this may be a suboptimal approach for many patients: excessive normal tissue is irradiated in those with smaller variations in position, but geographical miss may still occur in those with larger variations.

Improving Outcomes for Bladder Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy Delivery — the Problem of Motion

The core issue is variation in bladder volume and shape, although changes in bowel and rectal volume can also have clinical relevance. Henry *et al.* [19], in a study with repeat cone-beam computed tomographic imaging (CBCT) during a course of radiotherapy, showed that there are both systematic (Σ) and random (σ) variations in bladder volume, with some patients exhibiting systematic reductions in bladder volume. Changes in bladder volume result in three-dimensional changes in the bladder shape that show inter-individual variations for a given bladder volume change. Studies consistently show larger movements in the anterior and superior direction (up to 30 mm) and smaller movements laterally, inferiorly and posteriorly (requiring margins of about 10 mm) [20–22]. This strongly argues for the use of anisotropic margins for internal organ motion. There are also inter-individual variations in bladder filling rates, which may lead to unpredictable intra-fractional motion. However, there seems to be relatively constant intra-individual bladder filling rates during a course of radiotherapy [23,24].

Investigators from the Netherlands Cancer Institute have tried to quantify the effect of such intra-fractional bladder filling over a 10 min period using both magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and CBCT. Betgen *et al.* [24] studied bladder cancer patients and reported a mean increase in bladder volume of only 0.5 cm³/min with changes mainly in the cranial-ventral part of the bladder. There was a large variation in inflow rate between the individual patients (1.2–9.6 cm³/min). Lotz *et al.* [25] studied healthy volunteers and reported a linear increase in bladder volume with a large inter-individual variation in the inflow rate (2.1–15 cm³/min), but a small intra-individual variation over time. There was little short-term variation in bladder volume or position.

Invasive bladder cancer seems to affect the relative motion of the bladder wall compared with normal bladder. In a cine-MRI study evaluating intra-fraction motion, McBain *et al.* [26] found that wall displacement was greater, less symmetrical and less predictable in tumour-bearing bladders than in normal bladders — maximum displacement in a 14 min period was over 15 mm on eight of 19 occasions. Tumour position may also be crucial — the above study also reported that bladder expansion is often greatest away from tumour-bearing areas, suggesting that these areas may be less elastic, although no statistical relationship could be concluded [26].

Imaging Options During Radiotherapy

Two-dimensional ultrasound imaging of the bladder is simple, rapid, non-invasive and does not result in additional radiation exposure to the patient. It is useful in assessing bladder volume, but this is only a surrogate for position. It can also result in pressure deformation and is somewhat operator dependent. Its use may lie in assessing both inter- and intra-fraction volume changes, thereby differentiating between patients with and without large (random or systematic) volume changes: the latter may benefit from reduced margins [27]; treatment individualisation through the use of more advanced image-guided radiotherapy (IGRT) techniques can be reserved for those with significant variations.

Several imaging modalities can be used to obtain high-quality soft tissue imaging of the bladder during the planning or treatment phase. As well as the conventional modalities (ultrasound, computer tomography and MRI), on-treatment CBCT is usually able to give sufficient resolution to visualise the bladder and rectum [19,24,28]. Fiducial markers can be visualised using electronic portal imaging for IGRT [29] or to aid GTV delineation when considering partial bladder radiotherapy or focal boost. Mangar *et al.* [30] implanted five to six gold seeds into the mucosa or perivesical fat around the tumour bed and into the contralateral wall, 1 week before planning computer tomography in eight patients. A similar technique has also been used to aid target volume delineation [31]. Cystoscopically inserted lipiodol has also been used in a small study to aid tumour delineation and for IGRT [32]. Daily pre-treatment imaging is thus technically feasible, but the optimum frequency and timing of imaging is yet to be established.

Adaptive Radiotherapy Solutions

Inter- and intra-fraction volume changes lead to shape changes rather than a three-dimensional vector displacement of a stable volume. Therefore, any solution must go beyond simply repositioning the isocentre. Immediate re-planning after online imaging would require image acquisition, image transfer, outlining, planning, plan approval, plan checking and plan transfer, posing significant organisational challenges for any radiotherapy department. Furthermore, the time taken would lead to further volume and shape changes. Burridge *et al.* [20] proposed a 'PTV of the day', a technique requiring multiple approved PTVs and plans, corresponding to variable superior CTV to PTV margins (in their report 5, 10 or 15 mm), with a 15 mm CTV to PTV margin in other directions. They proposed CBCT imaging to select the most appropriate plan, ensuring at least 2 mm coverage of the bladder, but other imaging modalities could be used. The main benefit was sparing of small bowel from the high-dose region, but additionally 25% of patients may have benefited from re-planning due to a systematic error. Education of staff to ensure correct plan selection would be required.

A slightly different approach is adaptive predictive organ localisation (A-POLO). The daily target volume and plan is selected individually using a model based on the patient's three-dimensional bladder filling pattern, which is applied

to a daily pre-treatment CBCT. The added benefit of A-POLO over Burridge *et al.*'s approach is incorporation of the volume changes from bladder filling during the online processing of the CBCT image [33,34]. As we know that individual bladder filling rates are consistent over time, information from serial imaging, such as cine-MRI during the planning phase, can be used. A similar concept was raised by Muren *et al.* [22] with their use of a larger urine volume during planning (70 ml) than during treatment, incorporating some of the asymmetrical three-dimensional shape changes due to enlarging bladder volume into the planning process. An alternative approach would be to limit changes in bladder volume by restricting fluid intake, but this was unsuccessful in an initial study [35].

An alternative approach is the individualised margin proposed by Pos *et al.* [36], although this report discusses a bladder tumour boost as opposed to whole bladder irradiation. They treated 21 patients using a plan with a 20 mm isotropic margin around the tumour for the first 2 weeks. During the first week, five CBCT images were acquired and used to define an individualised composite GTV by defining the maximal volume on each slice. This was expanded with an isotropic 10 mm margin to create an adaptive PTV, which was treated in a second phase during weeks three and four, with CBCT used to confirm delivery accuracy. They reported 95% GTV coverage and an average 40% reduction in PTV volume. A similar approach has been tried by Foroudi *et al.* [37] for whole bladder radiotherapy with an adaptive CTV outlined as the average volume per slice and expanded isotropically by 15 mm. The varying bladder volumes from the first week's CBCT were also used to create 'plans of the day'. Both techniques could be used to improve subsequent CTV coverage. Rectal irradiation may also be reduced as tighter margins can be safely employed.

Conclusion for Bladder Cancer

This is an important time for bladder cancer radiotherapy, with the prospect of better patient selection based on molecular biology, functional imaging and response to neoadjuvant chemotherapy. Further improvements in outcome should be realised with anisotropic margins and one of several potential IGRT solutions, which should improve delivery accuracy, allow reduced margins and safe dose escalation. The solutions that would probably realise clinical benefits seem to be better patient preparation, off-line adaptive planning and using a 'plan of the day'. Prospective clinical evaluation is needed to show that these complex treatment protocols are deliverable and lead to improved organ preservation or reduced late toxicity.

Prostate Cancer

Introduction

Prostate cancer is now the most common tumour affecting men, with over 35 000 men affected in the UK in 2006 [38]. Five and 10 year survival rates are better than for

bladder cancer and many cured men will live for years with the side-effects of their treatment, so optimising the therapeutic ratio is paramount. As there are several radical treatment options that are thought to offer equivalent long-term tumour outcomes, treatment decisions are often based on the respective urinary, gastrointestinal and sexual side-effect profiles. Rectal avoidance, with 3D-CRT, has been shown to reduce the incidence of late rectal toxicity [39]. This has led to a series of dose escalation trials, which have shown an improved long-term tumour control at the expense of increased rectal toxicity [40–44]. Further technological advances that reduce rectal irradiation may allow further safe dose escalation.

Standard practice in the UK is to irradiate the whole prostate (\pm the seminal vesicles) in either a single phase or two phases. The entire prostate is generally outlined as the GTV (although it truly represents the CTV) as tumours are often multifocal but are difficult to accurately localise. Identification of dominant nodules (with magnetic resonance spectroscopy) or areas of relative radioresistance (with functional MRI identifying hypoxic regions) may allow partial volume irradiation or focal boosting [45–48]. Pelvic nodal radiotherapy remains controversial as it lacks a robust evidence base [49], but functional imaging with (11)C-choline positron emission tomography or MRI with ultra-small iron oxide particles offers hope for the future [50,51].

Improving Outcomes for Prostate Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy delivery — the problem of motion

The considerable internal organ motion of the prostate is primarily due to changes in rectal volume. This has now been shown to impact on tumour control. Two studies in the pre-IGRT era showed that the reduction in biochemical control associated with a large rectal volume at computer tomography planning (over 25 and 20%, respectively, in certain risk groups) was greater than the benefit seen within the dose escalation studies [52,53]. A large rectal cross-sectional area has also been associated with a reduced freedom from biochemical failure, despite the use of implanted fiducial markers and daily image guidance [54]. This surprising result was felt to be related to the relatively tight margins (5 mm in the anterior–posterior direction) and the steeper dose gradients of the conformal arc technique used.

Rectal volume changes and the resultant prostate movements can be sudden, unpredictable and profound, with a wide inter- and intra-patient extent of motion [55–57]. Movements generally lead to a three-dimensional vector shift rather than a change in shape, which can be corrected by repositioning rather than re-planning [58]. The greatest movement is in the anterior–posterior and superior–inferior directions, with larger movement and greater deformation in the seminal vesicles than the prostate [59]. Different systems that allow direct or indirect imaging of the prostate have been developed (discussed below); they reduce the systematic and random error from inter-

fractional motion compared with localisation based on bone anatomy and may allow a reduction in margins. Margins required without IGRT have been calculated to be 5.3–9.2, 7.0–14.6 and 8.7–11.0 mm in the left–right, superior–inferior and anterior–posterior dimensions, respectively [60–63]. Offline and online IGRT can be used to reduce these margins, but regardless of the system used, the degree of inter- and intra-patient variation suggests that an individualised, daily online approach is desirable. Residual errors include those from delineation errors, intra-fractional motion, observer error and delivery errors [64,65].

Several authors have studied the intra-fractional component of these residual errors by studying positional accuracy at the end of treatment [66], but the recent introduction of real-time radiographic tracking of fiducial markers and electronic transponders has provided more detail on the extent and impact of intra-fractional errors. Kotte *et al.* [67] studied the intra-fractional motion of 427 patients for 11 426 fractions by taking portal images of the first segment of all five beams and studying the position of the implanted fiducial markers. In 66% of fractions, a motion >2 mm was observed and in 28% a motion >3 mm. Motion was primarily in the superior–inferior and anterior–posterior directions, with population-level systematic errors of 0.5 and 0.6 mm, respectively. As both had random errors of 0.9 mm, a margin of 2 mm should be applied [68]. Several studies from the same group used data from tracked electronic transponder motion during treatment for up to 10 min [55,57,69,70]. They have shown that movements ≥ 3 mm occur for more than 13.6% of treatment time in 41% of treatment sessions and that movement ≥ 5 mm occurs for more than 3.3% of treatment time and in 15% of treatment sessions. The average vector shift from the isocentre was 1.5 ± 0.9 mm. A 2 mm margin minimised the dosimetric consequence of intra-fractional motion.

One solution to reduce motion is improved patient preparation with patient education, dietary advice, laxatives or enemas. These should be started before the planning scan and continued throughout treatment [71–76]. An individualised approach includes re-scanning patients if they have a large rectal diameter at the planning scan stage [77].

Imaging options before radiotherapy

Conventional portal imaging devices cannot visualise the prostate. Several systems that allow direct or indirect imaging of the prostate have been developed, all of which have entered routine clinical practice:

Rectal balloon catheters are inserted into the rectum and filled with ~ 40 ml air to act as an internal immobilisation device [78]. They have been used with 3D-CRT, IMRT and proton therapy and seem to be well tolerated, although they have never entered routine practice in the UK [79]. Balloons have two main benefits — reducing the extent of prostate motion and increasing the distance from the prostate to the posterior rectal wall [80].

Fiducial markers (e.g. 1 mm diameter gold seeds) can be implanted trans-rectally and imaged using kV or MV

electronic portal imaging devices and CBCT [81,82]. Seed implantation requires an invasive procedure with risk of morbidity equivalent to the diagnostic biopsy and seed migration may occur, albeit rarely [83]. Seeds may cause significant image artefact during target volume delineation. New devices are being developed to reduce these issues [84–86]. Fiducial markers allow daily imaging and daily shifts of the isocentre, but require an additional radiation dose. Their use does not remove all geometrical uncertainties — there is evidence of some prostate deformation during radiotherapy [87] and a potentially significant difference in the extent of prostate and seminal vesicle motion [88]. Most of the residual error is due to post-correction intra-fractional organ motion, discussed above, and outlining errors.

BeamCath® is an immobilisation device based on a urethral catheter with radio-opaque fiducial markers in the urethral section to enable visualisation with electronic portal imaging devices [89]. Issues include the need for repeated catheterisation and the sensitivity of the cranio-caudal position of the catheter to the precise volume of air within the catheter balloon [90].

Three-dimensional ultrasound can be used to visualise the prostate and its borders with the rectum and bladder. Several commercial systems are available, e.g. B-Mode Acquisition and Targeting System (BAT, NOMOS Corp, Cranberry Township, PA, USA) and SonArray (Varian Medical Solutions, Palo Alto, CA, USA), which allow visualisation of the outlines of these structures from the planning scan and calculation of the required three-dimensional vector shifts. Criticisms of the systems include inter-observer variations, length of procedure, and that the ultrasound procedure causes temporary prostatic displacement, such that some investigators have suggested that overall, residual errors are not significantly less than weekly or daily pelvic imaging based on bony anatomy [91–94].

Computer tomographic imaging can be used to image the prostate and/or implanted fiducial markers. There are various systems available: kV CBCT [95], kV computer tomography on-rails [96], MV CBCT [97] and helical MV computer tomography within the Tomotherapy Hi-ART system (Tomotherapy Inc., Madison, WI, USA) [98]. Each system allows the acquisition of images of high quality with excellent spatial resolution at the cost of time and ~5–15 cGy per image, which should not be ignored [97,99,100]. Acquired images can be used for the accurate identification of implanted markers and if image quality is sufficient, for direct soft tissue matching as the entire prostate and seminal vesicles can be visualised. Image datasets collected during the initial fractions can also be used to adapt the initial treatment based on individualised margins or delivered dose — ‘dose-guided radiotherapy’ [101–106].

Imaging options during radiotherapy

Electronic transponders, e.g. Calypso 4D Localisation System (Calypso Medical Technologies Inc., Seattle, WA, USA) can be implanted into the prostate to allow accurate, pre-treatment localisation without additional irradiation of

the patient. They give a comparable isocentre position to fiducial markers (within 2 mm) and can be used to assess real-time, intra-fractional motion data [55,57,69,70].

Robotic gantry systems offer the potential for tracking during radiation delivery. One system, Cyberknife (Accuray Incorporated, Sunnyvale, CA, USA), has a linear accelerator mounted on a robotic arm and uses a stereoscopic X-ray system and integrated software to track implanted fiducial markers during IMRT [107]. If intra-fraction motion exceeds the robotic tracking limits, treatment is halted while the patient is repositioned. Patients are generally treated in radically hypofractionated schedules of 35–37.5 Gy at 7–7.5 Gy per fraction [108–110].

In-room kV X-ray systems not only allow the identification of fiducial markers pre-radiotherapy. One commercial system, ExacTrac X-Ray 6D (BrainLab, Germany) incorporates both infrared optical positioning and radiographic kV X-ray imaging from two oblique X-ray imagers. Image fusion based on the kV images is transferred to positional adjustment, which is confirmed with the infrared system [111,112]. They also offer the potential for tracking and gating during radiotherapy, but this clinical application in prostate cancer is presently very limited.

Clinical concepts with image-guided radiotherapy

Advanced radiotherapy delivery systems, such as IMRT (including helical tomotherapy and intensity-modulated arc therapy), robotics and proton therapy, offer increased levels of conformality compared with 3D-CRT, but require more accurate delineation and delivery [113]. The temptation is to immediately use online IGRT solutions to reduce margins and then to explore further dose escalation. However, a period of familiarisation with IGRT to ensure accurate delivery should come first. Data from patients tracked with implanted transponders suggest that population-based margins of 2 mm are sufficient to exclude significant dosimetric consequences from intra-fractional error. This margin will be insufficient for some patients and becomes more important with hypofractionation as the contribution of each fraction is relatively higher [114].

Prostate movements during treatment increase with time, yet IGRT requires image acquisition, analysis and repositioning, all of which increase the time taken to deliver a treatment. Hypofractionation and IMRT also increase treatment time. Inter-beam realignment is possible and may allow further margin reduction at the cost of yet more time [115]. This might be worthwhile for extreme hypofractionation, which is now being explored in prospective clinical studies with advanced IGRT utilising fiducial markers and Cyberknife, but the dosimetric consequences of such intensive imaging protocols must be considered [110,116]. Attention to patient preparation to minimise changes in rectal volume may reduce the benefit from such intensive IGRT solutions and may be the most effective solution to introduce.

IGRT offers the potential of improved accuracy of treatment delivery, which may improve tumour control and

allow reduced margins. Reduced margins would be expected to reduce toxicity and may allow a further series of dose escalation studies. One step in this process is the recently approved IGRT substudy within the CHHiP trial expansion (ISRCTN 97182923) [117]. In this substudy, patients will be eligible for randomisation between the standard CHHiP protocol, daily online IGRT with standard margins and daily online IGRT with reduced margins (Professor Dearnaley, personal communication). This trial may be particularly important for the UK, where advanced radiotherapy has been difficult to introduce, despite the National Radiotherapy Action Group report [118,119], yet much progress is expected from the introduction of the National Radiotherapy Implementation Group, the e-learning Advanced Radiotherapy project and the formation of the National Cancer Research Institute's clinical and translational research radiotherapy group [120,121].

Conclusion for Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer continues in the forefront of research into advanced radiotherapy delivery systems. There is a great deal of data on the extent, time course and direction of prostate motion, which has been the predominant clinical issue and several functional IGRT solutions exist. The improved accuracy from these has increased the significance of delineation errors. Clinical trials to quantify the level of benefit with IGRT and to explore the potential benefit of further dose escalation are underway.

Conclusion

Bladder cancer and prostate cancer are two malignancies where significant target motion occurs, necessitating the use of margins to account for this. The causes and solutions are different: for bladder cancer, changes in the shape of the target volume require changes to the volume treated; for prostate cancer, a three-dimensional vector displacement requires accurate alignment of the isocentre. Historically these margins have been population derived yet this is now known to be suboptimal — individualised margins are desirable and are possible, optimising the accuracy of radiotherapy delivery for each patient. The optimal method for this is yet to be defined.

Radiation oncology is a technologically driven speciality throughout a patient's journey, with parallel advances at each stage (diagnosis, staging, planning, radiotherapy delivery and follow-up investigations) affecting other areas of the process and potentially improving outcome. Isolating, assessing and costing the clinical impact of IGRT is challenging, especially when the time course of clinical end points (late toxicities and long-term tumour control) is considered against the current pace of technological advances.

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