

MEDICAL CONSORTIUM CREATES ONLINE PHYSICIAN COMMUNITY

SHARING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE CANCER OUTCOMES

For uncommon diseases or unusual manifestations of more common diseases, expertise can be scattered around the world. This case study demonstrates how an international consortium of clinician-researchers is using Best Doctors' online collaboration platform, Medting, to share cases, offer opinions, and advance their collective expertise in chronic graft versus host disease (cGVHD), a complication of allogeneic (donor) stem cell transplantation.

A complicated disease requires a collaborative approach

In patients who have undergone allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, cGVHD is a poorly understood immunologic phenomenon with remarkably varied manifestations upon different target organs throughout the body. cGVHD is thought to represent a reaction of the donor stem cells against the recipient tissues that occurs months following transplantation.

Though the chances of GVHD are higher in less well-matched donor/recipient combinations, the condition also occurs in recipients of matched sibling transplants and it is a major source of long-term transplant related mortality and impaired health related quality of life. The varied complications of cGVHD are diagnostic and therapeutic challenges, requiring specific expertise in rheumatologic, orthopedic, dermatologic, pulmonary or other organ systems.

William Wood, MD, MPH, a bone marrow transplant clinician, outcomes researcher and member of the cGVHD Consortium (cGVHDC), agrees that diagnosing and treating complications of cGVHD is a complicated business.



“The value in this type of platform is that physicians can collaborate on challenging cases with multiple colleagues across institutions and even countries in an open, transparent and nearly real-time way.”

*William Wood, MD, MPH
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“Chronic Graft Versus Host Disease can present with a pulmonary complication called bronchiolitis obliterans, meaning a patient can present with trouble breathing, or it can present with skin tightness or joint stiffness, meaning a patient can present with a dermatologic, rheumatologic or orthopedic problem. These are just two examples among

many,” Wood said. “It requires expertise in diagnosis and treatment of a whole range of uncommon manifestations, and one person may not have all of that expertise. So, it’s very helpful to be able to connect with a community of physicians who share this expertise among them.”

Specialists in cGVHD practice in many different institutions across the globe. Even at a large-volume center of excellence, the local cGVHD expert may not always be familiar with some of the rarer manifestations of the disease, or the complications of the specific and uncommonly used medications used to treat those manifestations. Additionally, non-transplant subspecialty experts with particular interests in specific cGVHD manifestations are as geographically scattered as their transplant colleagues.

Online collaboration allows deeper dialogue and insight

As Wood notes, “The cGVHD consortium, like any other similar group of clinician-researchers, had previously been sharing cases through emails or phone calls. The Best Doctors' online collaboration platform has provided a new way for this group to interact, creating connections and transparent communications within a secure online environment.”



US-based cGVHD consortium members are now successfully collaborating on challenging cases with other experts at medical centers across the globe, from South America to Japan.

The ability to upload, store and access objective data and confer in almost real time, has extended and transformed the potential for collaboration.

In this way, the cGVHD online platform has virtually concentrated the world's collective GVHD expertise in one place, allowing physicians to gain practical insights that they can then apply to unique patient cases locally. The dialogue among experts has been a catalyst for exciting insights and approaches.

"The content is focused within a specific disease area and to a user community with expertise in this disease," Wood says. "That increases the reliability of the medical opinions offered on the site, so that the opinions offered are useful and clinically responsible."

Currently, 45 of the world's GVHD specialists are participating on the site, working on 23 challenging GVHD cases.



High-quality images and videos are easily shared – an invaluable tool when considering dermatological manifestations of the disease.

Promising patient results

Within a relatively short period of time, this unprecedented collaboration has already resulted in benefits to patient care.

Physicians have identified new treatment options for their patients such as adjustments to medication doses and, in

one instance, potential avoidance of surgery by pursuing an alternative treatment option.

Experts are also implementing preventative measures and learning how to monitor persistent or evolving clinical conditions.

Improve clinical outcomes with Medting

Medting, powered by Best Doctors, harnesses the latest technology to expand physicians' access to knowledge and shared understanding so they can give their patients the very best care.

- **Collaboration with peers and colleagues**

Medting makes it simple to confer with peers on challenging cases, bringing their knowledge and experience to the online forum. The collaboration can include just a few doctors or a larger team of experts.

- **Simple, confidential sharing of diagnostic information**

Uploading and sharing patients' diagnostic tests is simple – photographs, x-rays, laboratory results and other information can then be displayed for live discussion or comment and stored as a case library. All data and discussions are totally secure.

- **Questions answered**

Any specific questions on diagnosis or treatment can be put to the physician who is most likely to have expert insight – you can confer with more than one specialist for different elements of the problem or for a second or third opinion.

- **Backed by Best Doctors resources**

With 25 years' experience in connecting doctors to specialist support, Best Doctors is well-versed in connecting physicians. Already there are thousands of physicians in dozens of countries using Medting for either individual patient cases or for ongoing group discussions to advance their knowledge.

- **Optimum patient outcomes**

Collaboration and specialist expertise is more likely to result in the best course of action for patients, especially where the case is a recurrent, complex or rare condition.

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about the user-friendly way to access world-leading experts and collaborate on challenging cases. Contact:

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Register to use the collaboration platform at:
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More information on GVHD:

<http://rare diseasesnetwork.epi.usf.edu/cGVHD/>

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