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Commentary

This paper was first presented at a scientific meeting of the UK Children's Cancer Study Group. It highlighted the apparent wide variation in post bone marrow transplant practice and merited a referral to the UK Paediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Group for an attempt at standardisation and a unified approach. The group will publish national guidelines on the recommendations of care after bone marrow transplant by the end of 1994.

A survey of national and international practice has revealed that there are as many

opinions as there are transplanting units and it has to be acknowledged that at times there is more art than science to many of our recommendations. The aim is to adopt a common-sense approach having guided the child through the transplant procedure with its potentially lethal complications of graft rejection, graft versus host disease, and infection. At no time, however, should there be any compromise on safety.

The return to normal life as quickly as possible is a high priority with recognition that the family as a whole needs to settle to a less stressful routine. Nevertheless it must be appreciated that the extent of care after transplant is determined by clinical course and any individual transplant unit may have some firm ideas on certain aspects of care. It should be remembered particularly with the growth of unrelated donor bone marrow transplantation in specialised units that the degree of immunosuppression differs and hence the precautions advised after transplant will inevitably vary widely.

It has become clear, therefore, that rigid guidelines are impossible and there will always be variations dictated by disease and clinical course. Wherever possible a unified approach will be adopted to minimise the problem of complex and diverse take home instructions in this vulnerable group of children.

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