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Platinum Coordination Complexes

Updated: January 20, 2014.

OVERVIEW

The platinum coordination complexes are a group of antineoplastic agents that are usually classified as alkylating agents, but which have distinctive features. Their anticancer activity appears to relate to the cross linking of DNA molecules in a fashion similar to standard alkylating agents. The DNA adducts formed by the platinum-containing complexes inhibit DNA replication and lead to strand breaks and miscoding, thereby eliciting apoptosis as well as inhibition of RNA and protein synthesis.

The first of the platinum coordination complex with alkylating activity introduced into clinical medicine was cisplatin. Cisplatin was first described in 1845 as Peyrone's salt and in 1893 its chemical structure was elucidated. In the 1960s, cisplatin was shown to have anticancer activity in vitro and in vivo. Upon this discovery, multiple platinum containing compounds were synthesized and studied for anticancer activity in screening assays. Cisplatin was found to have the most potency. Cisplatin (Platinol) was approved for use in the United States in 1978 and became an important component of therapies of ovarian, testicular, bladder, head and neck, esophagus, lung and colon cancer. Carboplatin (Paraplatin) was approved for treatment of ovarian cancers in 1989 and oxaliplatin (Eloxatin) for colorectal cancer in 2003. The platinum coordination complexes have similar antineoplastic activities and are used largely for advanced cancer and in combination with other agents. All must be given by intravenous infusion, and all are associated with significant renal, intestinal, bone marrow and neurologic toxicities. The platinum-containing agents are also mutagenic, teratogenic and carcinogenic, and their use has been associated with an increased risk of secondary leukemias.

Cisplatin and carboplatin are rare causes of liver injury, while oxaliplatin has been associated with a high rate of histological changes when used prior to hepatic resection of colorectal cancer liver metastases. The most common changes linked to oxaliplatin are sinusoidal dilatation and vascular injury that may precede the ultimate development of nodular regenerative hyperplasia and noncirrhotic portal hypertension. The histological changes have little clinical significance, but progression to nodular regenerative hyperplasia can result in complications of ascites, variceal hemorrhage and hepatic decompensation. Once chemotherapy is stopped, the histological changes usually regress and nodular regenerative hyperplasia generally improves and rarely progresses. The platinum coordination complexes have other toxicities that are clinically significant and often overshadow the effects on the liver.

Each of the platinum coordination complexes is described separately, but references to their pharmacology and hepatotoxicity are given together after this introductory section.

- Carboplatin
- Cisplatin
- Oxaliplatin

Drug Class: Antineoplastic Agents; Subclass: Alkylating Agents

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- (Among 60 patients treated with escalating doses of cisplatin, 2 had transient AST elevations without jaundice or change in Alk P).
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- (47 year old man developed jaundice 4 weeks after an initial cycle of cisplatin [bilirubin 2.2 mg/dL, AST 58 U/L, Alk P 55 U/L], values falling to normal 4 weeks later, and similar elevations occurring with subsequent cycles until a peak bilirubin 9.8 mg/dL after fifth course [AST 144 U/L, biopsy showing fatty change, focal necrosis and cholestasis]: cisplatin Case 1).
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- (18 year old man with acute lymphocyte leukemia and cirrhosis developed severe thrombocytopenia within 6 days of starting carboplatin [platelet count 15,000/μL, bilirubin 5.6 mg/dL, AST 4690 U/L, Alk P 150 U/L] and death from multiorgan failure 10 days later; autopsy showed cirrhosis and marked centrolobular necrosis).
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- (3 patients, ages 52-73 years, developed jaundice 1-5 months after starting etoposide with several other cyclic antineoplastic agents including cisplatin and cyclophosphamide in two [bilirubin 4.2-13.0 mg/dL, ALT 790-2270 U/L, Alk P 181-280 U/L], resolving in 4-10 weeks and no recurrence on a similar regimen without etoposide in one patient).
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