



What Are the Side Effect Profiles for Modern AML Treatments?

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Andrew Schorr:

Let's talk about some of the side effects. You mentioned these new approved therapies. These are powerful medicines. I know it's going to vary. But what are some of the things I'm dealing with, not from the disease, but from the medicine?

Dr. Levine:

Well, it's a great question. And it's different for the different medicines. The liposomal form of chemotherapy still has a lot of the side effects of chemotherapy. They're just a little bit better tolerated. You still can lose your hair. You can still get low counts and mouth sores, but it's all better. But what I'm most excited about are the drugs, again, say IDH2, a drug called IDHIFA for the 5 to 10 percent of patients who have the IDH2 mutation. It's a pill. And you can take it. And you can be at home. And, in general, there are modest, at most, side effects. You might get a little swelling.

You might, in the first couple of weeks, feel a little off. But after a month or two, people feel quite good. And there are other leukemias, CML being an example, with imatinib (Gleevec) and sons of Gleevec, CLL now with a drug called ibrutinib (Imbruvica) where people can take pills that are directed against specific genetic blue print events in the leukemia.

And they take that pill, and the side effect profile is vastly different than what we're used to with chemotherapy and transplant. So, we're just beginning that era of smarter, more effective, and less toxic treatment.

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