



Patient Power

What Information Comes From a Bone Marrow Biopsy?

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Jeff Folloder:

The bone marrow biopsy is not the most fabulous diagnostic procedure that can be done. It's easier for some people than it is for others. Essentially, what we're doing is, we're dropping a rather big needle into the hip bone, and we're taking out some stuff, for you guys to analyze. Why is it that we can only get the information from that? Why can't we get everything we need from the peripheral blood? I'm gonna start with you, Dr. Lamanna.

Dr. Lamanna:

Yeah, you know, so, the good news is that most of the things we've been able to do, we do off your peripheral blood. So, that's the good news. There are circumstances, however, that think of where your cancer generates is, for most folks, unless you have just the bulky form of the disease, and your blood counts are fine. For most folks though, the cancer generates in your bone marrow. So, this is where you make your good cells, but also these leukemia cells. And, there are advantages for obviously, when you're looking at what the cancer cells are doing.

Depending upon each individual circumstance, we know that we're gonna see CLL in the bone marrow. That's not the question. The question is, sometimes, there are other nuances about the disease, that are important, and we can only do that by looking at your bone marrow. So, not only can you see how much of the disease that you have in your bone marrow, there are people who can have immune cytopenias, that might be related to your CLL. And, we might add or change your therapy, accordingly, because you have these autoimmune issues, as well. And so, some of that information really needs to be done on the bone marrow. So, there's a variety of reasons that going to the source, unfortunate for you guys, it happens to be in your bone marrow. If you have breast cancer, it's your breasts, right? So, there are different ways, but this is where these cancer cells are generated, and so, unfortunately, you have to go to the bone marrow, for now.

Maybe in the future, we'll get a little bit—obviously, we're developing ways that we can look at things that we're really just getting off the blood, and they may become less common. But, there are certain circumstances, where I still think that they'll probably still be important.

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