Management of Malignant Pleural Effusion - Adult

ECOG = Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group

1 Patients with chemo-radiosensitive tumors on initial treatment (lymphoma, breast cancer, and small cell lung cancer) could obtain palliation with therapeutic thoracentesis while waiting on systemic treatment results.

ECOG score of ≤ 2

Consider as clinically indicated:
- Pleuroscopic pleurodesis or
- Chest tube pleurodesis or
- Indwelling pleural catheter

Symptomatic improvement?

Yes

Consider as clinically indicated:
- Pleurectomy or
- Therapeutic thoracentesis

No

Life expectancy of > 30 days

Consider as clinically indicated:
- Therapeutic thoracentesis or
- Indwelling pleural catheter or
- Chemical pleurodesis if chest tube in place

Life expectancy of ≤ 30 days

Therapeutic thoracentesis

Follow up within 2 weeks with clinical evaluation and chest x-ray (PA/lateral)

B

Evaluate for re-accumulation every 2-4 weeks or as clinically indicated, with chest x-ray (PA/lateral)

See Box A on this page if pleural fluid re-accumulates

ECOG score of ≥ 3

Yes

No

Re-accumulation of malignant pleural effusion within 4 weeks of thoracentesis?

Yes

No

Chest x-ray (PA/lateral)

Therapeutic thoracentesis

Is lung re-expanded?

A

Yes

No

See Page 2

Disclaimer: This algorithm has been developed for MD Anderson using a multidisciplinary approach considering circumstances particular to MD Anderson's specific patient population, services and structure, and clinical information. This is not intended to replace the independent medical or professional judgment of physicians or other health care providers in the context of individual clinical circumstances to determine a patient's care.
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Post thoracentesis without lung re-expansion

Endobronchial obstruction?

Yes

Individualized care as clinically indicated

No

Follow up within 2 weeks with clinical evaluation and chest x-ray (PA/lateral)

Re-accumulation of malignant pleural effusion within 4 weeks of thoracentesis?

Yes

Symptomatic improvement after therapeutic thoracentesis?

Yes

ECOG score of ≤ 2

- Decortication
- Indwelling pleural catheter

No

ECOG score of ≥ 3

- Life expectancy of > 30 days

- Therapeutic thoracentesis
- Indwelling pleural catheter

No

- Life expectancy of ≤ 30 days

Therapeutic thoracentesis

Lung re-expansion with or without symptomatic improvement

See Page 1, Box B

Symptomatic improvement without lung re-expansion

See Box C on this page

No

Consider other etiologies to explain symptoms

ECOG score of ≤ 2

- Observation or
- Repeat therapeutic thoracentesis

No

Lung re-expansion and/or symptomatic improvement?

Yes

No

Evaluate for re-accumulation every 2-4 weeks or as clinically indicated, with chest x-ray (PA/lateral)

- See Page 1, Box A if pleural fluid re-accumulates

- Observation
- Repeat therapeutic thoracentesis

Lung re-expansion without symptomatic improvement
SUGGESTED READINGS


This practice consensus statement is based on majority opinion of the Pleural Effusion Work Group experts at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center for the patient population. These experts included:

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