

The Importance of Brain Tumour Awareness and Information to the Population

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Editorial

On the occasion of the brain tumour awareness day, which was organized at our hospital a few days ago, I would like to write some comments to stress out the importance of such events. The brain tumour awareness days are organized throughout Germany on different hospitals and aim to inform the general population about brain tumours.

Why informing the population about brain tumors? After all, it is rare disease right? In the US there are 22,500 new cases of malignant gliomas every year [1,2]. A significant number of patients no matter on the statistically rare incidence. We, the doctors, are aware of the prognosis of a glioblastoma (12-15 months) or an anaplastic glioma (2-5 years) and know that there is a long way until cure. Patients are aware of the extremely malignant nature of brain tumours too. They are not as informed as we would like them to be, about the different kinds of gliomas or new therapies and the procedures which are important during the treatment of gliomas. Our knowledge concerning gliomas and brain tumours in general, is changing in a very fast pace and we need to inform the population about this new knowledge. New treatment strategies based on the genetic profile of gliomas will develop in near future. The established treatment with surgical removal, chemotherapy and radiation is also very dynamic. Even that the overall survival of gliomas did not change much in the last two decades, the life quality of patients did. And this was possible because of our improved surgical techniques which allowed a more precise excision of the tumours by the least damage of physiologic tissue.

Being one of the doctors who is informing patients of the diagnosis of gliomas, I am surprised of the huge lack of information in the population concerning gliomas. Patients are devastated by hearing the diagnosis. This is a human reaction in front of a life threatening danger. But what is coming next, diagnostic procedures, surgery,

chemotherapy, radiation are all events in their lives, which they are completely unaware of. They let us just go on, and do not actively participate in the process of the therapy. Trying to treat or even deal with someone who has already given up is the worst part of therapy. We need informed patients to reach an optimal treatment. Of course after diagnosis they start getting informed and doctors help them to get the best possible information. At the moment of diagnosis though, they have a completely different perception than they would have when they were healthy. On the other site, the perfect condition for treatment would be a well informed environment too. Relatives and friends being aware of new therapies on gliomas would approach the patient in a different way. They could be much more supportive than destructive.

During the brain awareness day we hold small lectures about low-, and high grade gliomas, new treatment strategies and future perspectives. A guided tour through one of our operating rooms was offered too. The feedback of the individuals who participated was very positive. Almost every one is amazed on how many approaches are there, concerning treatment of gliomas. Informing the general population establishes more allies for doctors in the fight against gliomas and is a very important part of therapy which should not be neglected.

References

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