Brain irradiation in lung cancer

3 June 2009

A national Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG) study led by a Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center physician at Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee has found that a course of radiation therapy to the brain after treatment for locally advanced non-small cell lung cancer reduced the risk of metastases to the brain within the first year after treatment. The study was presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology annual meeting in Orlando, June 1.

"With improved treatments for non-small cell lung cancer, patients are living longer and we are seeing more brain metastases," says study author Elizabeth Gore, M.D. "This study compared the efficacy of prophylactic (preventive) cranial irradiation (PCI) vs. observation in these patients, and found that those not receiving cranial irradiation were two and one-half times more likely to develop brain metastasis than those who did."

The study analyzed 356 patients. While the results did not show a statistically significant difference in survival between the two groups, it did show that PCI significantly decreased the incidence of brain metastases during the first year post-treatment. Dr. Gore anticipates that additional study of the impact of PCI --on neuro-psychological function and quality of life in these patients-- will help determine if use of PCI should become standard care.

Source: Medical College of Wisconsin (news : web)