
Rassegna - Review

La sindrome anoressia-cachessia neoplastica: un update

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Cancer anorexia-cachexia syndrome: An update

ABSTRACT: Tumour growth is associated with profound metabolic and neurochemical alterations, which can lead to the onset of the anorexia-cachexia syndrome. Anorexia is defined as the loss of the desire to eat, while cachexia results from the progressive wasting of skeletal muscle mass - and to a lesser extent adipose tissue - occurring even before weight loss becomes apparent. Anorexia-cachexia syndrome is highly prevalent among cancer patients, having a large impact on morbidity and mortality, and greatly affecting the patient's quality life. Nevertheless, its clinical relevance is frequently overlooked, and treatments are usually attempted only during advanced stages of the disease. The pathogenic mechanism of cachexia and anorexia is multifactorial, but cytokines and tumour-related factors have a significant role, thereby representing a suitable therapeutic target. Energy expenditure in anorexia is frequently increased while energy intake decreases, something that further exacerbates the progressive deterioration of the nutritional status. The optimal therapeutic approach to the anorectic-cachectic cancer patient should be based on both changes in dietary habits, achieved via nutritional counselling, and drug therapy aimed at interfering with cytokine expression or activity. Better understanding of the influence a tumour has on host metabolism is improving new therapeutic approaches, which are likely to result in better preservation of the nutritional status if initiated concurrently with specific antineoplastic treatments. (RINPE 2005; 23: 91-8)

KEY WORDS: Anorexia, Cachexia, Cancer, Pathogenesis, Therapy

PAROLE CHIAVE: Anoressia, Cachessia, Cancro, Patogenesi, Terapia