



AUTOIMMUNE CONNECTIVE TISSUE DISEASES

DERMATOMYOSITIS AS A PARANEOPLASTIC CONDITION

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Paraneoplastic syndromes are a heterogeneous group of disorders occurring in the setting of systemic malignancy. Although these syndromes are rare, the clinical manifestations can herald an unsuspected, underlying malignancy.

Dermatomyositis (DM) has been associated with malignancy and has further been shown to appear before, concurrently with, or after diagnosis of cancer. Paraneoplastic DM may also associate with a relapse of previously treated cancers. The malignancy association occurs with adult DM, but generally not with the juvenile forms or polymyositis. Patients with DM sine myositis also appear to be at increased risk for associated carcinomas. The reported frequency of an internal malignancy in adults with DM varies from less than 10% to over 50%. Genitourinary malignancies, as well as colon, breast, lung and gastric cancer are commonly associated malignancies. Specific etiology remains poorly understood, but the possibility of autoantibody cross reactivity has been suggested.

It is recommended that a patient with adult dermatomyositis conducts a detailed diagnostic procedure for the detection of a malignancy directed by findings on frequent and thorough medical histories, physical examinations and screening laboratory and image tests. Timely diagnosis and management of associated malignancies coupled with a treatment plan focused on muscular endurance and improvement of skin lesions and other symptoms offer a favorable response to therapy along with the achievement of a higher quality of life for these patients.

