

Use of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-Trastuzumab PET to Predict Response and Outcome of Patients Receiving Trastuzumab Emtansine for Metastatic Breast Cancer: A Pilot Study

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We hypothesized that functional imaging with ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab PET/CT would predict the response to the antibody–drug conjugate trastuzumab–emtansine (T-DM1). **Methods:** Ten women with metastatic human epidermal growth factor receptor 2–positive breast cancer underwent ^{18}F -FDG PET/CT and ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab PET/CT on days 1 and 2 before treatment with T-DM1. **Results:** T-DM1-responsive patients had higher uptake than nonresponsive patients. Day 1 minimum SUV_{max} (5.6 vs. 2.8, $P < 0.02$), day 2 minimum SUV_{max} (8.1 vs. 3.2, $P < 0.01$), and day 2 average SUV_{max} (8.5 vs. 5.4, $P < 0.05$) for ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab all favored responding patients. Tumor-level response suggested threshold dependence on SUV_{max} . Patients with a day 2 minimum SUV_{max} above versus below the threshold had a median time to treatment failure of 28 mo versus 2 mo ($P < 0.02$). **Conclusion:** Measurement of trastuzumab uptake in tumors via PET/CT is promising for identifying patients with metastatic breast cancer who will benefit from T-DM1.

Key Words: breast; oncology; PET; breast cancer; breast PET

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Overexpression of human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2) occurs in 15%–20% of breast cancers and determines candidacy for trastuzumab, which improves disease outcome for all stages of HER2-positive breast cancer (1–3).

We have used ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab PET/CT to study women with recurrent or metastatic breast cancer (4) and reported a positive correlation between tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab and HER2 status as measured by immunohistochemistry (4,5). Trastuzumab–emtansine (T-DM1) is an antibody–drug conjugate that uses trastuzumab to target HER2-positive breast cancer and deliver its cytotoxic payload, emtansine (6). T-DM1's mechanism of action and use as a single agent are advantageous for correlating trastuzumab

imaging with treatment response. We report the results of a pilot study testing whether pretreatment ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab PET/CT can predict benefit from T-DM1 for HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Patient Selection

Eligibility requirements included metastatic or recurrent HER2-positive breast cancer in patients who were to receive T-DM1, were 18 y old or older, had an Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group performance status of 0–2, had a normal cardiac ejection fraction, and had at least 1 metastasis with a diameter of at least 2.0 cm. Patients could not have received trastuzumab for 4 or more weeks. Eligibility was confirmed by tumor biopsy for HER2 assessment and ^{18}F -FDG PET/CT. The City of Hope Institutional Review Board approved the study, and all patients provided written informed consent (NCT02226276).

Treatment

The patients underwent a clinical examination and toxicity assessment before each cycle of T-DM1. Follow-up ^{18}F -FDG PET/CT was performed after every 2 cycles of T-DM1 for up to 18 mo and at the discretion of the treating oncologist thereafter. Treatment response was evaluated by PERCIST (7).

^{64}Cu -DOTA-Trastuzumab-PET/CT

^{64}Cu was provided by the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, Washington University School of Medicine. Radiolabeled trastuzumab was prepared and administered according to IND 109971 as previously described (4).

Scans were acquired with a Discovery STe 16 PET/CT device (GE Healthcare) operated in 3-dimensional mode. The PET axial field of view and slice thickness were 15.4 cm and 3.3 mm, respectively. PET images were iteratively reconstructed as previously described (5) and had a measured resolution of 9 mm in full width at half maximum. ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab PET/CT was performed during the first day (day 1) and second day (day 2) after injection. Quantitative imaging with ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab was supported by direct measurement of activity concentrations in peripheral venous blood samples drawn before imaging on days 1 and 2. Measurement of ^{64}Cu -DOTA trastuzumab uptake is described in Supplemental Figure 1 (supplemental materials are available at <http://jnm.snmjournals.org>).

Antibody scans were interpreted in relation to baseline ^{18}F -FDG scans by a radiologist different from those who evaluated the ^{18}F -FDG PET/CT scans. Quantitative analysis was performed using XD (version

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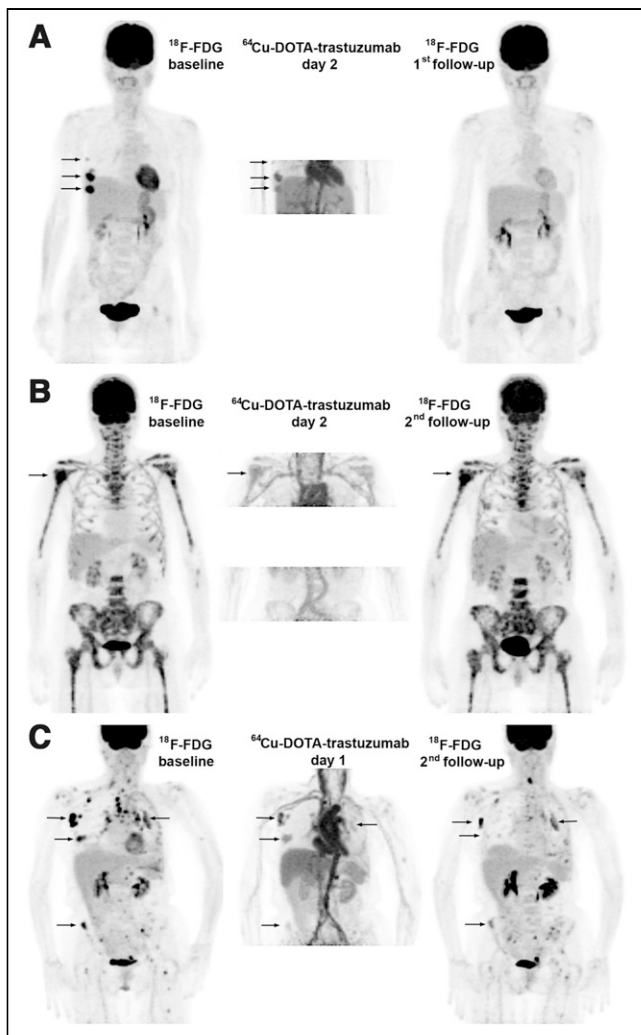


FIGURE 1. Treatment effects. Images are maximum-intensity projections with upper intensity thresholds (black color) corresponding to SUV of 7 and 10 g/mL for ^{18}F -FDG and ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab, respectively. (A) Response with baseline ^{18}F -FDG-positive disease limited to right breast and axilla (arrows). All lesions were well visualized with ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab, and follow-up ^{18}F -FDG showed complete response. (B) Nonresponse with extensive ^{18}F -FDG-positive bone metastasis. (Arrow indicates PERCIST target tumor.) Tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab was low (day 2 target tumor SUV_{max} , 5.5 g/mL). Disease progression occurred after 4 cycles of T-DM1. (C) Nonresponse with widely disseminated ^{18}F -FDG-positive disease. Tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab was variable, and tumor response at second ^{18}F -FDG follow-up (after 4 cycles of T-DM1) was correspondingly mixed.

3.6; Mirada Medical). Correction for altered ^{18}F -FDG biodistribution in follow-up examinations is shown in Supplemental Figure 2.

Tumor uptake was measured in terms of voxel SUV_{max} (4,5). Measurements were limited to tumors measurable for baseline ^{18}F -FDG uptake. Tumor images strongly overlapped by positively imaged adjacent features (e.g., a vessel or organ) were rejected for uptake measurement. Those that were strongly positive and well separated from adjacent features were segmented via a maximum voxel-based thresholding technique (8). The methods used for tumor assessment and numbers of tumors assessed are in Supplemental Tables 1 and 2.

Statistical Plan and Analysis

The study was designed to accrue 10 patients to explore the relationship between tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab and tumor

response. For individual tumors, a hierarchic (tumor-within-patient) linear mixed-effects model was used to evaluate the association between day 1 or day 2 SUV_{max} and response. The best SUV_{max} cut points for individual tumors were used in patient-level response (Fisher exact test), and planned comparisons of average (or minimum) uptake in responsive versus nonresponsive patients used the t test. All P values are 2-sided. Cox regression was used for time to treatment failure (TTF) (the supplemental materials provide additional details).

RESULTS

Ten patients were enrolled, and their characteristics are in Supplemental Table 3. Five experienced a response, and 5 were nonresponders; TTF ranged from 1.3 mo (early death) to 46 mo. Two patients continued in long-term follow-up at 62 and 78 mo from the initiation of chemotherapy. Figure 1 compares ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab and ^{18}F -FDG PET scans for 3 patients with varying responses to T-DM1.

Fifty-nine ^{18}F -FDG baseline-measurable tumors met the criteria for measurability of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab uptake, and 31 (day 1) and 25 (day 2) were also measured for response. Over half the data for individual tumors came from 2 patients (Figs. 1B and 1C).

Individual tumor response appeared to have a distinct threshold dependence on uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab, especially on day 2 (Fig. 2). Although the optimal uptake threshold settings accurately separated responsive from nonresponsive tumors, those results are not statistically significant in a hierarchical model of tumors within patient for this 10-patient cohort.

Patient-level response was positively related to tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab, and the thresholds that optimally related uptake to best response for individual tumors also accurately separated patients by response to T-DM1 (Fig. 3). Responsive patients had a significantly higher day 2 average, day 1 minimum, and day 2 minimum SUV_{max} than nonresponsive patients. In the categorical analysis (inpatient average or minimum tumor SUV_{max} > response threshold, yes/no, vs. responsive, yes/no), day 1 results were significant for minimum SUV_{max} , whereas day 2 results were significant for both metrics. For day 2, all patients with the lowest tumor uptake above the threshold responded, whereas no patients with the lowest tumor uptake below the threshold responded.

TTF was positively related to measured tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab (Table 1). For day 2, the relationship was statistically significant for both patient-level uptake metrics. Depending on the metric, the day 2 tumor response threshold discriminated patients with a median TTF of 2 versus 23 or 28 mo.

The supplemental materials include additional details about patients, treatment, response assessment, and ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab image analysis.

DISCUSSION

We demonstrated a significant association between tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab and patient benefit (response and TTF) from treatment with T-DM1. The ZEPHIR trial found pretreatment tumor imaging with ^{89}Zr -trastuzumab PET/CT to be predictive of patient response and TTF in T-DM1 therapy for HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer (9,10). The pretreatment work-up included ^{18}F -FDG PET/CT. ^{89}Zr -trastuzumab PET/CT scans acquired 4 d after injection were assessed by radiologists' qualitative inspection.

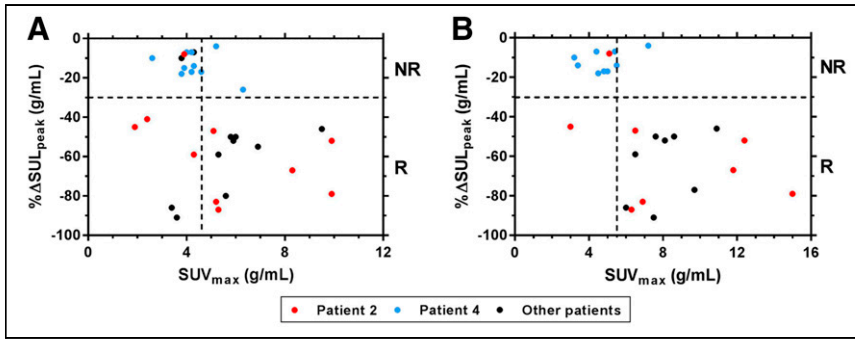


FIGURE 2. Percentage change in ^{18}F -FDG uptake ($\% \Delta \text{SUL}_{\text{peak}}$) is plotted vs. ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab SUV_{max} measured on days 1 (A) and 2 (B). Horizontal and vertical dashed lines show, respectively, PERCIST threshold for positive response (-30%) and thresholds (day 1, 4.6 g/mL ; day 2, 5.5 g/mL) that maximized accuracy of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab uptake in separating responsive from nonresponsive tumors. NR = nonresponsive; R = responsive.

Our quantitative study corroborates the ZEPHIR trial's finding that tumor uptake of trastuzumab on PET/CT correlates with patient response and outcome with T-DM1. Using SUV_{max} measurement, moreover, we found an apparent threshold relationship between tumor response and tumor uptake 1 and 2 d after injection of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab. The response thresholds for individual tumors also accurately separated patients by response and TTF. Based on published data for ^{89}Zr -trastuzumab (11,12), we estimate that the ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab SUV_{max} T-DM1 response threshold is modestly greater than blood pool SUV at 4 d postinjection (Supplemental Fig. 3 and associated text). This is consistent with the criterion for "relevant" tumor uptake of ^{89}Zr -trastuzumab vis-à-vis response to T-DM1 in the ZEPHIR trial.

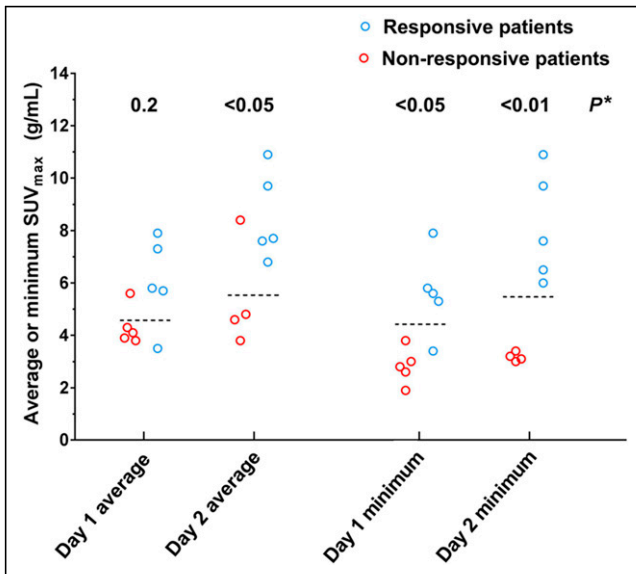


FIGURE 3. Relationship between patient best response to T-DM1 and measured tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab. Dashed lines show optimal thresholds relating response to uptake for individual tumors (day 1, 4.6 g/mL ; day 2, 5.5 g/mL). Group mean SUV_{max} (responsive vs. nonresponsive patients) was significantly different (t test) for day 2 average (8.5 vs. 5.4 , $P < 0.05$), day 1 minimum (5.6 vs. 2.8 , $P < 0.02$), and day 2 minimum (8.1 vs. 3.2 , $P < 0.01$). ($P = 0.08$ for day 1 average). *Fisher exact test for response vs. threshold.

The current study demonstrated some disadvantages of ^{64}Cu (half-life, 12.8 h) relative to ^{89}Zr (half-life, 3.3 d). ^{64}Cu does not provide whole-body coverage with an acceptable scan duration and adequate count density for accurate and precise measurement of tumor uptake. In the current study, the low count rate limited coverage of disease burden on day 2. Overlap with images of adjacent blood vessels reduced the number of tumor images measurable for ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab SUV_{max} . Variations in time between injection and scan ($t_{\text{scan}} - t_{\text{inj}}$) imposed by difficulty in scheduling research scans amid clinical operations added noise to measurements of tumor SUV_{max} . The resulting error is inversely

related to $t_{\text{scan}} - t_{\text{inj}}$ and thus inherently much worse for scans on days 1 and 2 than scans on day 4 or later. The problem is well illustrated by the patient (Fig. 1A) with the shortest day 1 time to scan (16 h). Although the patient had a complete response to T-DM1, SUV_{max} was below the empiric response threshold for both of her measurable tumors on day 1, whereas on day 2, SUV_{max} was above the threshold.

Despite limitations imposed by the relatively short half-life of ^{64}Cu , we have demonstrated that measurement of tumor uptake of trastuzumab at 1–2 d after injection can be effective in identifying patients unlikely to benefit from T-DM1 therapy. Further work is required to develop measurement of trastuzumab uptake as a predictor of clinical benefit from T-DM1. Trastuzumab imaging may identify patients who could benefit from T-DM1 and thus avoid the toxicity of chemotherapy. Trastuzumab imaging may also identify women who might not otherwise be considered for HER2-directed treatment (13).

We previously reported on the patient depicted in Figure 1C, whose disease demonstrated heterogeneous uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab and a correspondingly mixed response to T-DM1 (14). This case suggests that trastuzumab imaging may identify patients who could benefit from combining T-DM1 with chemotherapy or other treatments.

CONCLUSION

Tumor uptake of ^{64}Cu -DOTA-trastuzumab, measured in terms of SUV_{max} at 1–2 d after injection, was positively associated with patient response and TTF in T-DM1 therapy of HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer. The relationship between SUV_{max} and tumor response appeared to have a sharp threshold, and the threshold for individual tumor response was also effective in separating patients who did and did not benefit from T-DM1. Thus, measurement of trastuzumab uptake in tumors via PET/CT is highly promising for patient selection in treatment of metastatic breast cancer with T-DM1.

DISCLOSURE

Production of ^{64}Cu at Washington University School of Medicine is supported by the Department of Energy. The clinical trial was funded by the Baum family and the Yvonne Craig Aldrich Foundation. The Biostatistics and Mathematical Modeling Cores

TABLE 1
⁶⁴Cu-DOTA-Trastuzumab Uptake and TTF

Metric	Tumor uptake Cut point (g/mL)*	Patients > threshold		Patients ≤ threshold		Hazard ratio	P†
		n	Median TTF (mo)	n	Median TTF (mo)		
Day 1 average SUV _{max}	4.6	5	18	5	3	0.3 (0.1–1.3)	0.10
Day 2 average SUV _{max}	5.5	6	23	3	2	0.1 (0.0–0.9)	0.01
Day 1 minimum SUV _{max}	4.6	4	26	6	3	0.3 (0.1–1.3)	0.09
Day 2 minimum SUV _{max}	5.5	5	28	4	2	0.1 (0.0–1.0)	0.02

*Optimal threshold relating uptake to response for individual tumors.

†Log rank test.

Hazard ratios are >cut point relative to ≤cut point. Data in parentheses are 95% CIs.

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KEY POINTS

QUESTION: Is tumor uptake of ⁶⁴Cu-DOTA-trastuzumab as measured by PET/CT predictive of treatment benefit from T-DM1 in metastatic HER2-positive breast cancer?

PERTINENT FINDINGS: Response to T-DM1 was positively associated with tumor uptake of ⁶⁴Cu-DOTA-trastuzumab, measured as SUV_{max}. Tumor response appeared to have a distinct threshold dependence on SUV_{max}, and the response threshold for individual tumors accurately separated patients with respect to response and TTF.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PATIENT CARE: Pretreatment functional imaging of trastuzumab may help in selecting patients likely to benefit from T-DM1.

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