


Perspective
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Insights into Uterine Cancer: Risk Factors, Diagnosis and Therapeutic Strategies

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Description

Uterine cancer, also known as endometrial cancer, is a prevalent form of cancer affecting women's reproductive organs. It arises from abnormal cell growth in the lining of the uterus, known as the endometrium.

Understanding uterine cancer

Uterine cancer primarily originates in the endometrium, the inner lining of the uterus where fertilized eggs implant and develop during pregnancy. The exact cause of uterine cancer is not fully understood, but several risk factors contribute to its development, including hormonal imbalances, obesity, and genetic predisposition.

Causes and risk factors

Uterine cancer develops when cells in the endometrium, the lining of the uterus, mutate and grow uncontrollably. Several factors increase the risk of developing this cancer:

Hormonal imbalances: Excess estrogen without progesterone balance, often seen in women undergoing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) without progesterone, can elevate the risk.

Obesity: Adipose tissue converts hormones into estrogen, potentially increasing the risk of uterine cancer.

Age and menopause: Women over 50 are more likely to develop uterine cancer, with most cases diagnosed after menopause.

Endometrial hyperplasia: Abnormal thickening of the uterine lining can precede cancer development.

Family history: Having a close relative with uterine or colorectal cancer increases the risk.

Symptoms and diagnosis

Early detection of uterine cancer is important for successful treatment. Common symptoms include abnormal vaginal bleeding (after menopause or between periods), pelvic pain, and unusual discharge. Diagnostic procedures such as pelvic exams, ultrasound, biopsy, and imaging tests help confirm diagnosis and determine the extent of cancer spread.

Treatment options

Treatment for uterine cancer depends on the cancer stage, overall health, and personal preferences of the patient. Options include:

Surgery: The primary treatment involves surgical removal of the uterus (hysterectomy) and may include removal of ovaries and fallopian tubes (salpingo-oophorectomy).

Radiation therapy: High-energy rays target and destroy cancer cells, often used post-surgery to eliminate remaining cancer cells or as primary treatment for those who cannot undergo surgery.

Chemotherapy: Medications are used to kill cancer cells, either orally or intravenously, particularly for advanced or recurrent uterine cancer.

Hormone therapy: Hormonal treatments aim to block or lower estrogen levels, reducing the risk of cancer recurrence in hormone-sensitive tumors.

Preventive measures

While some risk factors like age and genetics cannot be changed, lifestyle modifications can reduce the risk of uterine cancer:

Maintaining a healthy weight: Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight through diet and exercise can help reduce estrogen levels and lower uterine cancer risk.

Hormonal therapy: For women undergoing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), using progesterone in combination with estrogen may lower the risk of uterine cancer.

Regular medical check-ups: Routine gynecologic exams and discussions with healthcare providers about symptoms or concerns can facilitate early detection and prompt treatment.

Conclusion

Uterine cancer poses significant health risks for women, but early detection and advancements in treatment offer favorable outcomes. Understanding the risk factors, recognizing symptoms, and seeking timely medical care are essential in managing and treating uterine cancer effectively. Through awareness, preventive measures, and ongoing research, strides continue to be made in improving outcomes and quality of life for women diagnosed with uterine cancer.

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