

## Experts develop transplant guidelines

### What were researchers trying to do?

The American Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (ASBMT) gathered a group of experts to recommend which diseases may be treated with blood or marrow transplant (BMT). The experts included:

- Transplant doctors
- Researchers
- Health insurance professionals
- A patient advocate

In this article, the transplant experts list diseases for which BMT is a routine treatment option. That is, the diseases with many years of research and thousands of transplants showing that BMT can effectively treat them. Diseases in this category include leukemias and lymphomas. The experts also list the less-common diseases treated with BMT and describe the research on BMT for those diseases.

All in all, the experts came up with 5 categories, ranging from “Standard of care” to “Not generally recommended” to describe the role of BMT in treating diseases.

### What did they recommend?

The experts came up with the 5 categories shown in the table below.

ASBMT Category	Description
Standard of care – well defined	Treatment with BMT is supported by a long history of use and many high-quality research studies.
Standard of care – clinical evidence available	Evidence from many high-quality research studies is not available, but existing research and experience indicate that BMT is effective.
Standard of care – rare indication	BMT is an effective treatment for these rare diseases, but research studies have included fewer patients.
Developmental	Recent studies show that BMT may be a treatment option in the future. Patients with these diseases who are considering BMT should participate in a research study.
Not generally recommended	Available evidence does not support the routine use of BMT.

These recommendations can guide doctors when they discuss whether BMT is a good option for their patients. The experts also said that even if a patient has a disease in a “Standard of care” category, BMT

may not automatically be his or her best option. That's because the best treatment depends not just on the disease a patient has, but on other factors including his or her general health, age, the characteristics of the disease, and how long a patient has had the disease.

#### **Important Point:**

**These recommendations are important guides for doctors and patients as they talk about whether BMT is a treatment option.**

#### **Why is this important?**

These guidelines are useful for health insurance companies. BMT is an expensive treatment. Health insurance companies want to make sure there is strong medical evidence that BMT can effectively treat a disease before they pay for the treatment. These guidelines list the diseases that BMT can effectively treat.

And finally, these guidelines can help doctors when they talk with patients about whether they should see a BMT doctor at a transplant center.

#### **What else should I keep in mind about this study?**

The experts remind readers that a decision on whether to have a transplant shouldn't be based simply on the 5 categories. They say that treatment decisions are best made between the patient and his or her doctor after talking about the alternatives, risks, and benefits of a treatment. For example, a transplant for a disease that is "Not generally recommended" may still be appropriate for a patient, especially if there's no other well-established treatment for that disease. But, in this case, there is a possibility that an insurance company would not pay for the transplant.

#### **Learn more about**

- [This research study](#)
- [Blood and marrow transplant](#)

#### **Source:**

Majhail NS, Farnia SH, Carpenter PA, et al. Indications for autologous and allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation: Guidelines from the American Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation. *Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation*. 2015 Nov 1; 21(11): 1863-1869. Epub 2015 Aug 7.

#### **About this research summary**

This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of the CIBMTR<sup>®</sup> (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research<sup>®</sup>). The CIBMTR is a research collaboration between the National Marrow Donor Program<sup>®</sup>/Be The Match<sup>®</sup> and the Medical College of Wisconsin.