Neutrophil counts continued to rise after reaching \(0.5 \times 10^9/L\) in 78 allograft recipients receiving granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) post-transplant. This was confirmed in 44 subsequent patients not receiving G-CSF. This suggests that the first day of neutrophils \(\geq 0.5 \times 10^9/L\) can be considered a valid definition of myeloid recovery after allogeneic transplantation.

Myeloid engraftment in hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) is defined as the first of three consecutive days with an absolute neutrophil count (ANC) of \(0.5 \times 10^9/L\) or greater (ANC500). This definition has become the standard for transplant registries such as the International Blood and Marrow Transplant Registry (IBMTR) and peer-review organizations such as the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cell Therapy (FACT). The tempo of myeloid recovery following autotransplantation is steady, making documentation of ANC500 for 3 consecutive days unnecessary.

Serial blood counts on 78 adults with hematologic malignancies (Table 1) allografted after standard regimens were studied. Myeloid growth factors were administered to 69 of 78 patients in the post-transplant period until ANC500 was seen for 3 days; 67 received G-CSF and 2 GM-CSF. ANC included segmented neutrophils as well as bands. A subsequent cohort of 47 patients treated uniformly without G-CSF underwent the same analysis to determine whether the data were reproducible.

Including the first day with ANC500, 3 consecutive ANC levels were available in 65 patients; 2 levels in 10 patients, and 1 level in 3 patients. In the last 3 patients ANC values were available 2-5 days after the first day with ANC500. Table 2 shows the ANC values in these groups and changes in ANC on consecutive days. Of the 75 patients with ANC values available on days 1 and 2, ANC increased from day 1 to 2 in 70 patients and declined in 5. In 4 of 5, it remained above \(0.5 \times 10^9/L\). It fell to less than \(0.5 \times 10^9/L\) in one but increased to \(>0.5 \times 10^9/L\) on day 3. Of the 65 patients with available ANC data for day 3, ANC increased from day 2 to 3 in 57 and declined in 8. None of the 8 had an ANC below \(0.5 \times 10^9/L\), and 6 had counts that were higher than those on day 1.

In the validation group, potentially acceptable evidence of engraftment, i.e. ANC on the 2 consecutive days following...
ANC500, was available for 44 patients (94%). ANC increased from day 1 to 2 in 39 of 44 patients, and declined in 5. It remained ≥0.5×10^9/L in 2 patients, and declined below 0.5×10^9/L in 3 patients - 2 of whom had an ANC ≥0.5×10^9/L the next day; 1 with G-CSF and 1 without. ANC increased from day 2 to 3 in 42 of 44 patients, and declined in 2 - but remained ≥0.5×10^9/L in both. ANC increased from day 1 to 3 in 43 of 44 patients; declining below 0.5 in 1 patient. This patient's ANC was below 0.5×10^9/L on the second day too, but it was ≥0.5×10^9/L on the fourth day and remained steady thereafter. Thus, in 43 of 46 patients not receiving G-CSF post-transplant, the first day with ANC ≥0.5 was also the first of 3 consecutive days with ANC ≥0.5×10^9/L. Our study shows that myeloid engraftment after allogeneic HSCT is robust and sustained. Only rarely does the ANC fall below 0.5×10^9/L within a couple of days after reaching that threshold level. Thus, the first day with ANC500 is the same as the first of three consecutive days of ANC500 in almost all cases. We therefore propose that myeloid engraftment after allogeneic transplantation be defined as the first day with ANC of ≥0.5×10^9/L without necessarily having two subsequent days of confirmation whether G-CSF is used or not. It is uncertain whether this can apply to cord blood allografts in which hematologic reconstitution is slower and less predictable.2

A change in the standard definition of myeloid engraftment has several implications. If transplant registries and organizations such as FACT changed the traditional definition to the one that we propose, data would less often be considered incomplete or deficient. This would not compromise the quality of the data or patients’ care. It is not always clinically necessary to check complete blood counts on the subsequent two days after the ANC reaches 0.5×10^9/L. Checking blood counts only for documentation purposes can result in longer hospital stays, extra clinic visits, and additional use of home care resources. The realization that the first day of ANC500 represents myeloid engraftment could also allow for earlier discontinuation of prophylactic antibiotics, but such steps require further investigation.

Christopher Rihn,* Jeffrey Cilley,* Payal Naik, Amit Verma
Jennifer Pedicano, Jayesh Mehta
Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant Program, Division of Hematology/Oncology, The Feinberg School of Medicine
The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

*Drs. Rihn and Cilley contributed equally to this work.

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Correspondence: Jayesh Mehta, M.D., 676 North St. Clair Street, Suite 850, Chicago, IL 60611, USA. Phone: international + 001.312.6954438. Fax: international + 001.321.6956189. E-mail: j-mehta@northwestern.edu