

PROCEDURE: EXTRACORPOREAL PHOTOPHERESIS

Description:

Photopheresis is a medical procedure in which blood is collected into a specialized machine and separated into white blood cells and the other components of blood. The white blood cells are then treated with a medication called methoxsalen, which makes them sensitive to ultraviolet light. The treated white blood cells are exposed to an ultraviolet light inside the machine and returned to the patient.

Rationale for the Procedure:

In certain conditions like Graft Versus Host Disease (GVHD), Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma or organ transplant rejection, medications alone are often not effective. The addition of photopheresis for these diseases may improve symptoms. It is not known exactly how photopheresis works; it is thought that the procedure changes the activity of the immune system. This alteration of the immune system can help decrease symptoms or treat transplant rejection.

Venous Access:

In some cases photopheresis can be performed using needles that are placed in each arm. The blood is removed from one arm and returned through the other arm. In patients with small or fragile peripheral veins, a central venous catheter may be necessary.

Duration:

The duration of the procedure varies from patient to patient. Generally, this procedure takes 1.5-4 hours to complete.

Risks and Side Effects:

Photopheresis is generally safe and well tolerated, but side effects can occur. Possible side effects include fatigue, decreased blood pressure during the procedure, dizziness, temporary increase in itching, and low grade fever.

Diseases for Which the Procedure is Used:

Photopheresis is used to treat conditions such as Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma, transplant rejection, and GVHD.

Number of Procedures that are Required:

The number and length of treatments vary depending on the disease being treated, the severity of symptoms, and the response to photopheresis. Your physician will determine your treatment plan. Response to treatment is gradual and can take weeks to months to be noticeable. It is important to continue with treatment.

Other Considerations:

Methoxsalen makes patients more sensitive to sunlight for 24 hours after treatment. It is important to avoid sunlight, wear sunscreen when exposed to sunlight, and wear UVA protective eyewear during this time.

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