

# Non-AIDS defining cancers: a comprehensive update on diagnosis and management

M. CECCARELLI<sup>1,2</sup>, E. VENANZI RULLO<sup>1,2</sup>, M.A. MARINO<sup>3</sup>, F. D'ALEO<sup>4</sup>, G.F. PELLICANÒ<sup>5</sup>, F. D'ANDREA<sup>1</sup>, A. MARINO<sup>6</sup>, B. CACOPARDO<sup>6</sup>, B.M. CELESIA<sup>6</sup>, G. LA ROCCA<sup>7</sup>, M. DI ROSA<sup>8</sup>, F. CONDORELLI<sup>9</sup>, M. BERRETTA<sup>10</sup>, G. NUNNARI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Messina, Italy

<sup>2</sup>Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biomedical Sciences and Morphologic and Functional Imaging, University of Messina, Messina, Italy

<sup>4</sup>Unit of Microbiology and Virology, "Bianchi-Melacrino-Morelli" Hospital, Reggio Calabria, Italy

<sup>5</sup>Department of Human Pathology of the Adult and the Developmental Age "G. Barresi", University of Messina, Messina, Italy

<sup>6</sup>Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Catania, Catania, Italy

<sup>7</sup>Cancer Biology and Genetics Program, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY, USA

<sup>8</sup>Department of Biomedical and Biotechnological Sciences, University of Catania, Catania, Italy

<sup>9</sup>Department of Pharmacological Sciences, University of Oriental Piedmont "A. Avogadro", Novara, Italy

<sup>10</sup>Department of Medical Oncology, Istituto Nazionale Tumori, IRCCS - CRO, Aviano (PN), Italy

**Abstract.** The increasing incidence of chronic pathologies and especially non-AIDS defining cancers, such as lung cancer, hepatocellular carcinoma, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, and Hodgkin's lymphoma after the introduction of combined antiretroviral therapy requires the infectious diseases specialist to know how and when to suspect and diagnose cancer in people living with HIV.

The aim of this review is to provide updated studies and information about non-AIDS defining cancers and their management in PLWH shedding a light on possible futures scenarios.

#### Key Words:

Lung cancer, Hepatocellular carcinoma, HCC, Breast cancer, Colorectal cancer, CRC, Prostate cancer, Hodgkin's lymphoma, HIV, PLWH, People living with HIV.

## Introduction

HIV pandemics began during the early 1980s, seemingly appearing from nowhere<sup>1</sup>. At its debut on the world stage, HIV disease was always accompanied by the so-called "AIDS-defining pathologies". These diseases, together with HIV infection, are a certain sign of Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Among them, three neoplasms were particularly frequent in People Living with HIV (PLWH). Kaposi's Sar-

coma (KS), Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL) and HPV-related invasive cervical cancer were so frequently diagnosed in PLWH at their terminal stage of the disease, that they deserved the nickname of AIDS-defining cancers (ADCs)<sup>2-13</sup>.

After more than ten years of the HIV epidemics, the introduction of the Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) led to a real revolution for PLWH<sup>14</sup>. HIV infection was no longer a death sentence, with the possibility of living an almost normal life. However, such good news was soon followed by its downside: the increasing incidence of chronic pathologies and especially non-AIDS defining cancers (NADCs)<sup>5,15-59</sup>.

Among NADCs are included lung cancer, hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), breast cancer, colorectal cancer (CRC), prostate cancer, and Hodgkin's Lymphoma (HL)<sup>60-80</sup>.

Increased cancer risk in PLWH is related to different factors. First and foremost, HIV causes a dysregulation of the immune system. This leads to a chronic upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as Interleukin (IL)-6, IL-8, IL-12 and Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF)-, even when the plasmatic viral load (pVL) is undetectable. This chronic inflammatory stimulus has been related to cancer in several studies<sup>81-85</sup>. Moreover, at risk behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol use have been found to be more frequent in PLWH than in the general population<sup>20</sup>.

In addition to its increased frequency, in PLWH cancer is also more aggressive and tends to progress faster. Therefore, for an infectious diseases (ID) specialist, and for every clinician, it is important to know the dangers linked to the infection.

Thus, the aim of this review is to provide updated evidence and information about NADCs and their management in PLWH, also shedding a light on possible futures scenarios.

## Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the most frequent cancer in the world, representing the 11.6% of all cancers newly diagnosed in 2018. This high rate is also found in PLWH, for whom lung cancer is the most common NADC and the most frequent cause of cancer-related death<sup>62,77,86-88</sup>.

PLWH are burdened by a risk 3-fold higher of developing lung cancer than the general population, probably because of the higher rate of smoking in this population<sup>61,89,90</sup>. Moreover, PLWH seem to develop lung cancer at a younger age than the general population, with an increased mortality as the cancer exhibits a more aggressive behavior and faster progression<sup>76,91-95</sup>. As a matter of fact, several studies showed that, in the US, the prevalence rate of smoking is 35-70% among PLWH, approximately 20% for the general population<sup>96-98</sup>. Luckily, in the last few years we assisted to a progressive decrease of the smoking habit among PLWH, which was accompanied by a decrease in lung cancer incidence rate<sup>99</sup>. However, lung cancer is still more frequent in PLWH than in the general population and smoking is still a major risk factor<sup>100</sup>. Other risks factors are represented by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and recurrent pneumonitis, which cause an intense and persistent inflammatory stimuli on lung cells and increased levels of CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells activity<sup>101-106</sup>.

HIV is an independent risk factor for lung cancer. Hleyhel et al<sup>107</sup> showed that HIV-infected individuals who did not recover a CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell count to at least 500 cells/ $\mu$ L had an increased risk of developing lung cancer. Other studies also highlighted the role of HIV-related chronic inflammation as an independent risk factor for lung cancer. The effects of a persistent increase of plasmatic IL-6, C Reactive Protein, and D-dimer on the incidence of lung cancer, are well described by Borges et al<sup>108</sup>. HIV has been found to infect lung macrophages, a reservoir in which its activity is not suppressed by antiretroviral therapy (ART), even in non-smokers

affected by lung cancer<sup>109</sup>. This raised the question on the role of HIV as a direct oncogene<sup>61,62,103,109</sup>. However, there are no conclusive reports about a direct oncogenic activity of HIV on lung, despite some early studies suggestions<sup>62,110-112</sup>.

Given its high incidence in PLWH and its burden in mortality, it is important to prevent this cancer or diagnose it at an early stage, when it is still not symptomatic.

Primary prophylaxis is represented by smoking cessation<sup>62</sup>. Several studies<sup>113-116</sup> showed that both behavioral and pharmacologic intervention are effective in reducing lung cancer incidence in PLWH.

A survival rate of 50-80% at 5 years is granted by early diagnosis<sup>93,95,117,118</sup>. Therefore, a once-a-year low-dose (LD) chest computerized tomography (CT) scan is recommended especially for people considered at high-risk of developing lung cancer. Italian guidelines for the diagnosis and management of HIV-1 infection recommend screening to all PLWH who are older than 40 years, with an active smoking history of more than 30 pack/year or who have ceased smoking for less than 15 years<sup>119</sup>. However, Kong et al<sup>120</sup> showed that mortality rate in PLWH with CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell count above 500 cells/ $\mu$ L and an adherence of 100% to ART is not different to the general population by applying the same screening criteria (age > 55 year-old, with an active smoking history of > 30 pack/year or who have ceased smoking for less than 15 years). Moreover, the US Preventive Task Force have already established in 2004 that a screening program for asymptomatic people was not cost-effective, especially in PLWH, who are affected by a high prevalence of non-cancerous pulmonary nodules<sup>120-122</sup>. The same opinion seems to be shared by the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS) that in 2017 did not include lung cancer screening in their guidelines<sup>123</sup>. Further studies are needed to establish the real risk-benefit ratio for lung cancer screening in PLWH.

Lung cancer is often asymptomatic or accompanied by non-specific symptoms at its onset<sup>61</sup>. When symptomatic, the first step towards a diagnosis is a chest X-ray. However, chest X-ray is burdened by a 90% level of missed diagnosis, mostly because of observer errors, tumor characteristics, and technical issues<sup>124</sup>. Therefore, more often the first examination in the suspect of lung cancer is a chest CT scan, whose level of missed diagnosis is only 5%<sup>61,124</sup>. Missed diagnosis are the most frequent cause for a possible early diagnosed cancer to become an advanced, and unfortunately not curable, one<sup>124</sup>. The most recent positron emission tomog-

raphy (PET) combined with total body CT scan (PET/CT) permits to distinguish a metabolically active pulmonary lesion from a non-active one. Moreover, being a total body scan, it also permits to highlight the presence of metastatic disease<sup>125-128</sup>.

There is a need for specific and minimally invasive screening and diagnostic tests. Micro-RNA 411 (miR-411) and long-noncoding RNAs, such as LINC00152, DKFZP434-L187, and LOC285548 have been studied for their correlation with tumor-nodes-metastatic (TNM) stage, differentiation degree, and prognosis<sup>61</sup>. More studies are needed to confirm whether this correlation might be exploited for clinical reasons. In the era of personalized medicine, a chance for early diagnosis is given by the radiomics analysis. Recently, Shi et al<sup>129</sup> analyzed radiologic and radiomic features for identifying opportunistic pulmonary infections misdiagnosed as lung cancers in patients with human immunodeficiency virus in a small group of patients<sup>49</sup>. The authors found that four radiomic parameters of central-type lesions were significantly different between cancer and OPI's patients<sup>129</sup>. However, these data need to be expanded and validated in larger series.

After the diagnosis, it is important to choose the best management. Up-to-date, surgery is still the gold-standard treatment in the case of lung cancer<sup>130,131</sup>. Stage I and II of lung cancers are treated with surgery, mainly lobectomy, and lymph nodes evaluation. For the smallest lesions and only for those types of lung cancer which are at low risk of micro-metastasis, a sub-lobar resection could be the elective surgery<sup>132-135</sup>. More advanced stages (III and IV) require a combined approach with chemotherapy and radiotherapy<sup>136</sup>. Combined therapy can be carried out as a neoadjuvant approach (chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy before surgery) to reduce the local extension of the tumor and possibly destroy micro-metastasis, an adjuvant approach (chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy after surgery) to prevent recurrence, or both<sup>136,137</sup>. Oncology is the most advanced medical discipline in terms of personalized medicine, and classic chemotherapeutic drugs, such as cisplatin and carboplatin are being progressively replaced by monoclonal antibodies, such as erlotinib and afatinib, which are inhibitors of the epithelial growth factor receptor, or crizotinib, an inhibitor of the anaplastic lymphoma kinase and the c-ros oncogene<sup>138-141</sup>. However, both erlotinib and afatinib decrease the production of activated and memory CD4+ T-lymphocytes and are therefore not indicated in PLWH. No effect on CD4+ T-lymphocytes is known for crizotinib<sup>138-141</sup>.

Erlotinib and afatinib use is affected by a high rate of adverse events, such as diarrhea and low-grade rash, while crizotinib use leads to an increase of transaminases and blood creatinine. Table I shows the adverse effects of the biologic drugs and their drug-to-drug interactions with ART drugs.

Lately, a rising interest has been shown towards a new class of drugs called “inhibitors of the immune-checkpoints”. These drugs are directed towards molecules mediating the regulation of the immune system, such as the Programmed cell Death 1 (PD-1) and Programmed cell Death Ligand 1 (PD-L1). Pembrolizumab, nivolumab and atezolizumab are molecules currently under observation for lung cancer<sup>142</sup>. They seem to be effective even against the most difficult type of cancers and have a role in modulating T-cell activation in peripheric tissues<sup>143,144</sup>.

Currently, there are no reports showing an increased risk for metastatic cancers or AIDS in PLWH treated with immune-checkpoints inhibitors. On the contrary, Fromentin et al<sup>145</sup> showed that CD4+ T-cells highly expressing PD-1 and TIGIT (T cell immunoglobulin and ITIM domain) have an increased probability to be infected by HIV compared to cells not expressing them (relative ratio 1.18, 95% CI 1.07-1.31,  $p = 0.002$ ). Therefore, the use of immune checkpoints inhibitors directed against PD-1 could also help eradicate the infection by activating latently infected cells and mediating a “shock and kill” approach.

## Breast Cancer

Breast cancer represents 11.6% of new cancer diagnosis in the whole world, with a 6.6% mortality. Incidence and mortality are more than double (24.2% and 15.0% respectively) when only considering women<sup>67,87</sup>. Little is known about the epidemiology of breast cancer in PLWH. Different studies had different conclusions, but all of them agree on the fact that breast cancer incidence in PLWH is similar or even slightly lower than in general population<sup>145</sup>.

HIV and breast cancer share signaling pathways and receptors, which may explain the complex interactions existing between the virus and this cancer<sup>146,147</sup>. Despite the fact that the incidence of breast cancer is not increased in PLWH, several studies showed how the virus play a role in accelerating the evolution of the cancer, especially acting on immune signaling, angiogenesis upregulation and metastatic spread, leading to a worse prognosis<sup>148-152</sup>.

**Table I.** List of NADCs, biologic and immunotherapeutic drugs used in their treatment with targets, most common adverse effects and possible interactions with antiretroviral drugs.

Cancer	Drug (primarily metabolism)	Target	Common Adverse Events	DDIs with ART drugs
<b>Lung</b>	Erlotinib <i>(CYP3A4. Lesser extent by CYP1A2 and CYP1A1)</i>	EGFR	Infections, Anorexia, Loss of weight, dry eye, conjunctivitis, depression, headache, dyspnea, cough, diarrhea, nausea vomiting, abdominal pain, skin rash, itchiness, dry skin, alopecia, asthenia, fever	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir
	Afatinib <i>(P-gp and CYP3A5)</i>	EGFR	Infections, anorexia, epistaxis, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, stomatitis, skin rash, acneiform dermatitis, itchiness, dry skin	<b>Inhibitors of P-gp:</b> Ritonavir Nelfinavir Saquinavir
	Crizotinib <i>(CYP3A4 Lesser UGT1A1)</i>	ALK ROS1	Neutropenia, anemia, leukopenia, decreased appetite, neuropathy, dysgeusia, vision disorder, dizziness, bradycardia, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, constipation, abdominal pain, elevated aminotransferases, rash, edema, fatigue	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir Substrates of UGT1A1: Raltegravir <b>Carried of OCT1 and OCT2:</b> Dolutegravir Bictegravir
	Pembrolizumab <i>(plasmatic Esterase)</i>	PD-L1	Pneumonitis, anemia, thrombocytopenia, lymphopenia, infusion related reactions, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, decreased appetite, hyponatremia, hypokalemia, hypocalcemia, insomnia, headache, dizziness, peripheral neuropathy, lethargy, dysgeusia, dry eye, cardiac arrhythmia, hypertension, dyspnea, cough, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, constipation, colitis, dry mouth, rash, itchiness, severe skin reactions, erythema, dry skin, vitiligo, eczema, alopecia, dermatitis acneiform, musculoskeletal pain, arthralgia, pain in extremities, myositis, arthritis, fatigue, asthenia, edema, fever, influenza-like illness, chills, elevated aminotransferases, elevated bilirubin, increased blood ALPh, hypercalcemia, increased blood creatinine	<b>None expected</b>

Continued

**Table I (continued).** List of NADCs, biologic and immunotherapeutic drugs used in their treatment with targets, most common adverse effects and possible interactions with antiretroviral drugs.

Cancer	Drug (primarily metabolism)	Target	Common Adverse Events	DDIs with ART drugs
	Nivolumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	PD-L1	Upper respiratory tract infections, neutropenia, infusion related reactions, hypersensitivity, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, decreased appetite, peripheral neuropathy, headache, dizziness, hypertension, pneumonitis, dyspnea, cough, diarrhea, nausea, colitis, stomatitis, vomiting, constipation, dry mouth, rash, itchiness, vitiligo, dry skin, erythema, alopecia, musculoskeletal pain, arthralgia, fatigue, fever, edema, elevated aminotransferases, elevated bilirubin, increased blood AIPh, hypercalcemia, increased blood creatinine	<b>None expected</b>
	Atezolizumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	CTLA-4	Urinary tract infection, thrombocytopenia, infusion related reactions, hypothyroidism, decreased appetite, hypokalemia, hyponatremia, hyperglycemia, hypotension, cough, dyspnea, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, colitis, dysphagia, oropharyngeal pain, elevated transaminases, hepatitis, rash, itchiness, arthralgia, back pain, musculoskeletal pain, fever, fatigue, asthenia, influenza-like illness, chills	<b>None expected</b>
<b>Breast</b>	Trastuzumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	HER-2	Infections, nasopharyngitis, febrile neutropenia, anemia, neutropenia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, weight loss, anorexia, insomnia, tremor, dizziness, headache, paresthesia, dysgeusia, conjunctivitis, increased lacrimation, blood pressure disorders, cardiac arrhythmia, decreased ejection fraction, hot flush, wheezing, dyspnea, cough, epistaxis, rhinorrhea, erythema, rash, swelling face, alopecia, nail disorder, palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia syndrome, arthralgia, muscle tightness, myalgia, asthenia, chest pain, chills, fatigue, influenza-like illness, infusion-related reactions, pain, fever, mucosal inflammation, peripheral edema	<b>No formal drug interaction study performed</b>
	Pertuzumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	HER-2	Nasopharyngitis, febrile neutropenia, neutropenia, leukopenia, anemia, infusion-related reactions, decreased appetite, insomnia, peripheral neuropathy, headache, dysgeusia, peripheral sensory neuropathy, dizziness, paresthesia, increased lacrimation, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, constipation, dyspepsia, abdominal pain, alopecia, rash, nail disorder, itchiness, dry skin, myalgia, arthralgia, pain in extremities, mucosal inflammation, peripheral edema, fever, fatigue, asthenia, hot flush, cough, epistaxis, dyspnea	<b>No formal drug interaction study performed, except with other antitumor drugs</b>
	Lapatinib ( <i>CYP3A4</i> )	RTK	Anorexia, insomnia, headache, decreased ejection fraction, hot flush, epistaxis, cough, dyspnea, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dyspepsia, stomatitis, constipation, abdominal pain, hyperbilirubinemia, hepatotoxicity, rash, dry skin, palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia syndrome, alopecia, itchiness, nail disorder, pain in extremities, back pain, arthralgia, fatigue, mucosal inflammation, asthenia	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir

Continued

**Table I (continued).** List of NADCs, biologic and immunotherapeutic drugs used in their treatment with targets, most common adverse effects and possible interactions with antiretroviral drugs.

Cancer	Drug (primarily metabolism)	Target	Common Adverse Events	DDIs with ART drugs
	Olaparib ( <i>CYP3A4 and CYP3A5</i> )	PARB	Anemia, neutropenia, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, lymphopenia, rash, decreased appetite, dizziness, dysgeusia, cough, dyspnea, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, dyspepsia, upper abdominal pain, stomatitis, fatigue, increased blood creatinine	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir <b>Carried of OCT1 and OCT2:</b> Dolutegravir Bictegravir
	Talazoparib	PARB	Thrombocytopenia, anemia, neutropenia, leukopenia, lymphopenia, decreased appetite, dizziness, headache, dysgeusia, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, stomatitis, dyspepsia, alopecia, fatigue	<b>Inhibitors of P-gp:</b> Ritonavir Nelfinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir
<b>Prostate</b>	Pembrolizumab	PD-L1	See "lung"	See "lung"
<b>CRC°</b>	Cetuximab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	EGFR	Hypomagnesemia, dehydration, hypocalcemia, anorexia, headache, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, elevated aminotransferases, skin reactions, infusion related reactions, mucosal inflammation	<b>No formal drug interaction study performed, except with other antitumor drugs</b>
	Panitumumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	EGFR	Conjunctivitis, paronychia, anemia, hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia, decreased appetite, insomnia, dyspnea, cough, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, stomatitis, constipation, dermatitis acneiform, rash, erythema, itchiness, dry skin, skin fissures, acne, alopecia, back pain, fatigue, fever, asthenia, mucosal inflammation, peripheral edema, weight loss	<b>No formal drug interaction study performed, except with other antitumor drugs</b>
	Bevacizumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	EGFR	Febrile neutropenia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, anorexia, hypomagnesemia, hyponatremia, peripheral sensory neuropathy, dysarthria, headache, dysgeusia, eye disorder, increased lacrimation, hypertension, venous thrombo-embolism, dyspnea, epistaxis, rhinitis, cough, rectal hemorrhage, stomatitis, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, wound healing complications, exfoliative dermatitis, dry skin, skin discoloration, arthralgia, myalgia, proteinuria, ovarian failure, asthenia, fatigue, fever, pain in extremities, mucosal inflammation, weight loss	<b>No formal drug interaction study performed, except with other antitumor drugs</b>
	Atezolizumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	CTLA-4	See "lung"	See "lung"

Continued

## Diagnosis and management of NADCs

**Table I (continued).** List of NADCs, biologic and immunotherapeutic drugs used in their treatment with targets, most common adverse effects and possible interactions with antiretroviral drugs.

Cancer	Drug (primarily metabolism)	Target	Common Adverse Events	DDIs with ART drugs
	Ipilimumab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	CTLA-4	Tumor pain, anemia, lymphopenia, hypopituitarism, hypothyroidism, decreased appetite, dehydration, hypokalemia, confusional state, peripheral sensory neuropathy, dizziness, headache, lethargy, blurred vision, eye pain, hypotension, flushing, hot flush, dyspnea, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, gastrointestinal hemorrhage, colitis, constipation, gastroesophageal reflux disease, abdominal pain, mucosal inflammation, abnormal hepatic function, rash, itchiness, dermatitis, erythema, vitiligo, urticaria, eczema, alopecia, night sweats, dry skin, arthralgia, myalgia, musculoskeletal pain, muscle spasms, fatigue, injection site reaction, fever, chills, asthenia, edema, pain, influenza-like illness, increased aminotransferases, increased ALPh, increased blood bilirubin, weight loss	None expected
HCC*	Sorafenib ( <i>CYP3A4 and UGT1A1</i> )	TyK	Infection, lymphopenia, anorexia, hypophosphatemia, hemorrhage, hypertension, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, constipation, dry skin, rash, alopecia, hand foot skin reaction, erythema, itchiness, arthralgia, fatigue, pain, fever, weight loss, increased amylase, increased lipase	<b>Substrates of UGT1A1:</b> Raltegravir
	Regorafenib ( <i>CYP3A4 and UGT1A1</i> )	TyK	Infection, thrombocytopenia, anemia, decreased appetite and food intake, hemorrhage, hypertension, dysphonia, diarrhea, stomatitis, vomiting, nausea, hyperbilirubinemia, elevated aminotransferases, hand-foot-skin reaction, rash, asthenia, fatigue, pain, fever, mucosal inflammation, weight loss	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir <b>Substrates of UGT1A1:</b> Raltegravir
	Lenvatinib	TyK	Urinary tract infection, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, neutropenia, hypothyroidism, hypocalcemia, hypokalemia, weight loss, decreased appetite, insomnia, dizziness, headache, dysgeusia, hemorrhage, hypertension, hypotension, dysphonia, diarrhea, gastrointestinal and abdominal pain, vomiting, nausea, oral inflammation, oral pain, constipation, dyspepsia, dry mouth, increased bilirubin, hypoalbuminemia, elevated aminotransferases, palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia syndrome, rash, alopecia, back pain, arthralgia, myalgia, pain in extremities, musculo-skeletal pain, proteinuria, fatigue, asthenia, peripheral edema	<b>None expected with substrates of CYP3A4 and P-gp. No other studies were conducted</b>

*Continued*

**Table I (continued).** List of NADCs, biologic and immunotherapeutic drugs used in their treatment with targets, most common adverse effects and possible interactions with antiretroviral drugs.

Cancer	Drug (primarily metabolism)	Target	Common Adverse Events	DDIs with ART drugs
HL <sup>^</sup>	Rituximab	CD20	Bacterial infections, viral infections, bronchitis, neutropenia, leukopenia, febrile neutropenia, thrombocytopenia, infusion-related reactions, angioedema, nausea, itchiness, rash, alopecia, fever, chills, asthenia, headache, decreased IgG levels	None expected
	Brentuximab ( <i>plasmatic Esterase</i> )	CD30	Infection, upper respiratory tract infection, neutropenia, peripheral sensory neuropathy, cough, dyspnea, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, abdominal pain, rash, itchiness, arthralgia, myalgia, fatigue, pyrexia, infusion-related reactions, chills, weight loss	<b>Inhibitors of CYP3A4:</b> Atazanavir Ritonavir Cobicistat Indinavir Lopinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir <b>Inducers of CYP3A4:</b> Efavirenz Etravirine Nevirapine Fosamprenavir <b>Inhibitors of P-gp:</b> Ritonavir Nelfinavir Saquinavir Tipranavir
	Pembrolizumab	PD-L1	See "lung"	See "lung"
	Nivolumab	PD-L1	See "lung"	See "lung"
Anal	Cetuximab	EGFR	See "CRC"	See "CRC"
	Panitumumab	EGFR	See "CRC"	See "CRC"

<sup>^</sup>CRC: Colorectal cancer; \*HCC: Hepatocellular Carcinoma; <sup>^</sup>HL: Hodgkin Lymphoma

Source: <http://www.hiv-druginteractions.org/data/ExtraPrintableCharts/ExtraPrintableChartID7.pdf>

Therefore, it is imperative to try and diagnose breast cancer in PLWH as soon as possible<sup>67</sup>. A case-control report by D'Andrea et al<sup>18</sup> showed that PLWH and their doctors are more careful towards periodic screening than the general population, and this is particularly true for breast cancer. Screening tests for breast cancer start with self-breast examination. Every woman should examine her own breast looking for bumps once a month under the shower<sup>67</sup>. In PLWH, breast cancer screening consists in a mammogram performed once a year in women older than 50 years, according to the Italian guidelines<sup>119</sup>. Mammography false negative rate is attested around 20%, meaning that 1 out of 5 cancers are not diagnosed with this method. This happens especially in young women, because of a denser texture of the mammal gland<sup>153</sup>. Therefore, for younger women suspecting breast cancer, it is suggested

to use either an ultrasound (US) approach or, if at high risk, a breast MRI<sup>18,19,154,155</sup>. Despite the many downsides of mammography (radiation exposure, uncomfortable examination, false negative rate), it is still the gold standard for breast cancer screening, because of its cost-effectiveness ratio<sup>156,157</sup>. As a matter of fact, mortality by breast cancer is reduced by 19% when a mammography screening is applied<sup>158</sup>.

In PLWH, genetic factors (BCRA1 and 2 genes, Li Fraumeni syndrome), familiarity, iatrogenic factors (chest irradiation at a young age, hormonal therapy) and individual factors (atypical hyperplasia, pregnancy in old age, premature menarche and late menopause) contribute to define the level of risk for breast cancer<sup>159</sup>.

Both imaging techniques and biochemical markers are important in the diagnosis of breast cancer<sup>158</sup>. We previously highlighted that mam-



mography, US, and MRI are also used in breast cancer screening. Multiparametric MRI with abbreviated protocols, i.e., reduced time of scanning, can be used as screening tool in the high-risk population with excellent results<sup>160,161</sup>. Furthermore, Marino et al<sup>162</sup> have shown the potential benefit of mammography screening in male patients at high-risk for developing breast cancer. PET and single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) can be considered second level tests, which are used for confirmation and staging of cancer<sup>163,164</sup>.

Several proteins, mRNAs, enzymes and microRNAs (miR) have been highlighted as diagnostic biomarkers by some studies<sup>150-152</sup>. Among them, the Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor 2 (HER-2), the Estrogen Receptor (ER), miR-21, miR-10b, miR-155, and miR-145. HER-2 and ER are involved in breast cancer pathogenesis and are also therapy targets<sup>158,165</sup>. miRs are still in a study phase for possible clinical applications, but the interest around them is high, and in the near future we could assist to a miR-targeted drug revolution.

The term “breast cancer” includes different types of cancer. Hormone Receptor (HR) positive breast cancer represent the 85% of the cancers, and they are ER and Progesterone Receptor (PR) positive. This type has the best prognosis. These cancers can be targeted with ER antagonists (tamoxifen), ER expression modulators (fulvestrant) and Aromatase Inhibitors (AIs) (letrozole, anastrozole, exemestane)<sup>165</sup>.

A percentage of HR positive breast cancers belongs to a second type: HER-2 positive cancers. This type, which is more aggressive and fast growing, has a worse prognosis than ER-positive cancers. However, HER-2 positive cancers can be targeted with monoclonal antibodies against HER-2 (trastuzumab, pertuzumab) or tyrosine kinase receptor inhibitors (lapatinib), which are well-tolerated<sup>165</sup>. Trastuzumab and pertuzumab increase the number of CD4+, especially those infiltrating the tumor, leading to a better rate of complete response. According to this effect, it is reasonable to think that the use of these molecules is immunologically safe in PLWH with breast cancer.

A third type of breast cancer, called triple-negative (TNBC) because of its lack of expression of ER, PR and HER-2, has a prevalence of 15%. These cancers have the worst prognosis because they lack targeted treatments<sup>165</sup>. Poly-ADP-Ribosyl Polymerase (PARP) inhibitors (olaparib and talazoparib) have been approved for use in BRCA1/2 positive cancers and HER-2 metastatic cancers<sup>166</sup>.

More PARP inhibitors are currently under study for the treatment of advanced TNBCs<sup>166</sup>. The interest is also high around the phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K)/AKT pathway, immune checkpoint inhibitors (PD-L1), cyclin-dependent kinase (CDK) 4/6 and topoisomerase-1.

Therapy is not different in PLWH, despite the need to avoid drug-drug interactions. However, Wang et al<sup>167</sup> demonstrated an upregulation of TAR binding protein 2 (TARBP2) in the case of tamoxifen-resistant breast cancers. It is possible to hypothesize that an upregulation of TARBP2 can happen in presence of HIV-1, thus conferring to it tamoxifen resistance<sup>167</sup>. Further studies are needed to confirm this possibility.

## Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer (PC) is the second cancer per incidence in men, with 13.5% new diagnoses per year. It is also the 5<sup>th</sup> cancer in terms of mortality in men<sup>87</sup>. It is expected that it will become even more frequent in the future<sup>168</sup>. It is more common in Afro-American men; however, it is most frequently diagnosed in Western Europe and North America<sup>87</sup>.

Similar to the general population, incidence in PLWH has been progressively increasing<sup>169</sup>. PLWH risk of developing PC seems to be lower than in general population<sup>170</sup>. However, PLWH are burdened by a higher mortality compared to the general population, even though there are discordant evidence<sup>75,95</sup>. The higher mortality rate might be related to a lower screening rate, even though several studies<sup>18,95,171</sup> highlighted that PLWH receive the screening more often than HIV-negative men. However, Coghill et al<sup>172</sup> highlighted that, despite a higher rate of screening, PLWH tend to be diagnosed at a worst tumor-node-metastasis (TNM) stage than the general population.

Age, Afro-American race, positive family history, androgen supplement use and obesity are risk factors for the onset of prostate cancer. In PLWH, there are also HIV-related risk factors<sup>173,174</sup>. In fact, a worse immune status is associated to a more rapid progression of PC. Moreover, HIV seems to be involved in the activation of cellular pathways leading to increased angiogenesis and reduced apoptosis<sup>66,76,175,176</sup>.

Screening test for PC consists of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing. Italian guidelines for the diagnosis and management of HIV-1 infection suggest that every HIV-positive individual

> 50-year-old should undergo the plasmatic PSA testing at least once a year<sup>119</sup>. Several scholars<sup>177</sup> showed that the screening rate varies with race, ethnicity, income and education. If PSA levels are higher than 4.0 ng/mL, with free-PSA > 25%, digital rectal examination (DRE) and a trans-rectal US with prostate biopsy are performed<sup>178</sup>. However, this approach has a 21% to 28% rate of false negatives<sup>179</sup>. Diagnosis and staging are completed with multiparametric MRI, a technique showing a 89% sensitivity with a 73% specificity<sup>180,181</sup>.

The approach to PC depends on the stage of the disease. For localized cancers curative treatment can be delayed, if the patient is willing to undergo watchful waiting and active surveillance<sup>182</sup>. The gold standard for prostate cancer treatment is surgery or radiotherapy. Surgery consists in radical prostatectomy. Radiotherapy can be performed with external beams or brachytherapy. Both surgery and radiotherapy can be associated to androgen deprivation therapy (ADT)<sup>177</sup>. Currently, ADT is the first line treatment in case of metastatic disease<sup>179</sup>. However, some metastatic cancers are ADT-resistant. In these cases, chemotherapy with taxanes (docetaxel, cabazitaxel) or mitoxantrone or estramustine can be applied<sup>183</sup>. The use of the immune checkpoints inhibitors is currently under evaluation in ADT-resistant PC, with disappointing preliminary results<sup>184-186</sup>. However, the use of pembrolizumab in PD-L1 positive metastatic ADT-resistant prostatic cancers has showed promising results in many studies<sup>187-189</sup>.

Treatment outcome and adverse effects do not differ in PLWH compared to general population<sup>177</sup>. Further studies are needed to understand the effectiveness of immune checkpoint inhibitors in PC.

## Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal Cancer (CRC) is the third cancer per mortality rate in the general population<sup>96</sup>. Reports are discordant about whether PLWH have an increased risk for CRC than HIV-negative individuals<sup>89</sup>. However, most PLWH are diagnosed for CRC in a more advanced stage, at a younger age and with more aggressive forms of cancer, leading to a poorer prognosis<sup>190</sup>.

Risk factors for the development of CRC can be divided in modifiable and non-modifiable. Among the modifiable risk factors we have obesity, poor physical activity, alcohol use, smoking, high intake of red meat and decreased intake of

vegetable and fruit<sup>64,68,191-198</sup>. Among the non-modifiable risk factors there are a positive personal or familiar history of adenoma, familiar history of CRC, hereditary polyposis, and inflammatory bowel diseases<sup>176,197,199-201</sup>.

Several studies have investigated the existence of HIV-related risk factors but have been inconclusive. However, CD4+ T-cell count (current or at nadir), HIV-RNA viral load (current or at nadir), and HPV infection seem to be associated with carcinogenesis<sup>202</sup>.

Different pathogenetic mechanisms have been identified for CRC. Chromosomal instability is the most frequent cause of cancer onset in individuals not affected by predisposing syndromes<sup>169,203-205</sup>. It accounts for 65-70% of sporadic cancers and it often leads to a dysregulation of mitotic checkpoints, such as *hRod*, *hZwilch*, *hZwll0*<sup>206</sup>. Less frequently, the cause is the mutational activation of the *kRAS*, an oncogene, and the inactivation of *tp53*, a tumor suppressor gene<sup>169,203-205</sup>. Only a minority of the CRCs is linked to hereditary syndromes, such as Lynch syndrome, familial adenomatous polyposis, APC1307K, Peutz-Jehgers syndrome, MYH associated polyposis, juvenile polyposis, and hereditary polyposis. These syndromes cumulatively accounts for 4-6% of all CRCs. Most commonly, cases of CRCs in a syndrome are linked to a mutation in one of the DNA mismatch repair genes (MLH1, MSH2, MSH6, PMS2, EPCAM)<sup>70,207</sup>.

A possible downregulation of miRNAs, and especially of miR32, miR34a, miR143, miR153, miR153, miR27a, miR218, miR520, is currently under study for a possible cause-effect with CRC<sup>208-217</sup>.

As it happens for other cancers, CRC presents with non-specific symptoms, such as fatigue, anemia and weight loss<sup>70</sup>. The Italian guidelines for the diagnosis and management of HIV-1 infection currently recommend screening PLWH for CRC every year with fecal occult blood test (FOBT). The same criteria apply to the general population<sup>119</sup>. Several studies demonstrate that a periodical screening with FOBT significantly reduce CRC-related mortality rate<sup>191,218,219</sup>. However, Half et al<sup>220</sup> demonstrate that FOBT on three consecutive samples has a rate of false negatives higher than 50%. Therefore, FOBT should be handled carefully, especially in high-risk patients<sup>221</sup>.

If positive, FOBT should be followed with rectal sigmoidoscopy and/or colonoscopy. Rectal sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy should be repeated every five and ten years, respectively<sup>19</sup>.

Colonoscopy represent the gold standard for CRC diagnosis, with a high sensitivity which permits to identify cancer, pre-malignant adenomas and differentiate from other symptomatic colon disorders<sup>70,222-224</sup>. In the event that the colonoscopy is incomplete, unfeasible or refused by the patient, computed tomographic colonography (CTC) is a valid option. CTC is a minimally invasive, patient-friendly, safe technique. Different studies have shown similar diagnostic performances for the detection of CRC and large polyps to colonoscopy. However, its role as screening tool is still controversial<sup>225</sup>.

The staging of CRC should be performed with thoraco-abdominopelvic CT scan and liver MRI. Moreover, RAS status, BRAF V600E status, micro-satellite instability (MSI), and dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) enzyme activity should be evaluated before starting the treatment<sup>226</sup>. In fact, RAS expression level is a predictor of EGFR inhibitors resistance, both BRAF V600E and MSI are risk factors for a poor prognosis and DPD deficiency can contraindicate the use of fluoropyrimidine<sup>226</sup>.

Surgery is the treatment of choice in CRC, and different techniques are applied in different stages of the cancer<sup>70</sup>. Laparoscopic approach is limited to stages with the lowest risk of spreading, while a laparotomic approach is preferred when the disease is more extended<sup>227</sup>. Moreover, a surgical treatment is reserved to those patients whose benefit is higher than the risk, because of anesthesia and resection<sup>226</sup>.

There is still no accepted neoadjuvant treatment for CRC, and the debate is still open on the effectiveness of pre-operative radiotherapy, especially in patients with cancers invading the peri-mucosal fat<sup>228</sup>. Adjuvant CT is offered to patients with CRC, to reduce the risk of recurrences<sup>229</sup>. Wang et al<sup>230</sup> evaluated the effectiveness of different combinations of CT and EGFR inhibitors. They demonstrated that CT + cetuximab or panitumumab is effective in increasing the survival of RAS wild-type left-sided tumors, while CT + bevacizumab is more effective in right-sided tumors<sup>230</sup>. Differently from lung, breast, and prostate cancers, anti-PD1 pembrolizumab and nivolumab does not improve the overall survival in patients affected by CRC. However, in cases of MSI-high metastatic CRC refractory to fluoropyrimidine, oxaliplatin, and iridotecan-based chemotherapy, targeting PD-1 seems to have a real clinical benefit<sup>231</sup>. Also, anti-PD-L1 and anti-CTLA4, such as atezolizumab and ipilimumab,

have shown clinical benefit in MSI-high metastatic CRC<sup>231</sup>. Further studies are needed to achieve an improvement of the overall survival in CRC, which is currently 20% at 5 years<sup>231</sup>.

Most of the drugs used for CRC cause a deep decrease in CD4+ T-cell count. Therefore, particular attention is needed in PLWH<sup>232</sup>.

## Hepatocellular Carcinoma

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common primary liver malignancy and the sixth most common cancer in the world<sup>87</sup>. The majority of the cases are related to Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) or Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) infections. Due to the comparable geographical spread of HCV and HBV infections and HIV infection, HCC has become a burden for PLWH ever since the introduction of cART<sup>233-240</sup>. HCC has a particular geographical distribution. In fact, HCC represent a public health problem especially in Asian countries. The second place for prevalence of HCC is occupied by African countries<sup>241,242</sup>.

HCC is the best studied NADC, with its six-fold higher risk of developing the cancer in PLWH than the general population<sup>239</sup>. Risk factors for HCC are represented by chronic HBV- and HCV-related hepatitis, HIV infection, alcohol abuse, smoking, and diabetes. Other, less frequent, risk factors, are high testosterone levels, *Aspergillus spp* aflatoxin, metabolic, and genetic diseases (i.e., hemochromatosis, Wilson's diseases,  $\alpha$ -1 antitrypsin deficiency, glycogen storage diseases, porphyria)<sup>242,243</sup>.

Italian guidelines for the diagnosis and management of HIV-1 infection suggest to screen PLWH every 6-12 months if co-infected with HCV or HBV and suffering from liver cirrhosis<sup>119</sup>. The same screening is suggested if HBV-DNA is detected in plasma. Screening is performed through a hepatic US and  $\alpha$ -fetoprotein (AFP) dosage<sup>19</sup>.

Prevention of HBV-related and HCV-related HCC can be achieved by treating the hepatotropic infections. According to the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), PLWH co-infected with HCV and/or HBV should be treated accordingly to their conditions<sup>244,245</sup>. Since 2017, treatment for HCV is available to all the people who are infected, independently from the stage of the disease. Therefore, for HIV/HCV co-infection, similar to general population, the suggestion is to treat the infection as soon as pos-

sible, paying attention to drug-drug interactions with cART<sup>245</sup>. Treating HCV infection with direct acting antiviral (DAA) drugs permits to achieve a cure. Therefore, the infection cannot cause damage to the liver anymore<sup>245</sup>.

This is not the reality of HBV. Despite the active research, an eradicating treatment for HBV infection is still missing. EASL guidelines for the treatment of HBV infection suggest that PLWH co-infected with HBV should be treated with a tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF)-based or tenofovir alafenamide fumarate (TAF)-based regimen<sup>244</sup>.

However, prevention sometimes fails, or the liver damage is not virus-related, and cancer occurs<sup>64</sup>.

Hepatic nodules (HNs) can be detected by US, contrast-enhanced CT scan or MRI<sup>246,247</sup>. US are useful for screening but burdened by several limitations. First of all, with regards to smaller HNs, US cannot differentiate between benign and malign lesions. Moreover, it is an operator-dependent and patient-dependent technique<sup>248,249</sup>. Contrast-enhanced CT scans are usually used to confirm a diagnosis of HCC after a nodule detection by US, because of their high specificity but low sensitivity<sup>243,250,251</sup>. MRI has both high sensitivity and high specificity, but its high costs prevent its application in screening<sup>243,252-254</sup>.

Several biomarkers are used for diagnostic and prognostic evaluation. The most useful are AFP, lecithin bound AFP to total AFP ratio (AFP-L3), and des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin (DCP). However, despite their high sensitivity, these markers lack specificity<sup>255</sup>. Therefore, the interest during the last years has been focused on finding a more specific prognostic marker. LncRNA and miRNA related to HCC and its staging were identified. Especially, a cluster of three lncRNAs (LINC00152, RP11-160H22.5 and XLOC014172) and miR-454 raised the interest for being highly predictive for HCC<sup>256-259</sup>.

The choice of the best treatment depends on the stage of the disease<sup>64</sup>. Similar to what happens for other cancers, PLWH are often diagnosed with HCC in an advanced stage<sup>243</sup>. Therefore, the therapeutic options are limited. Surgical treatment depends on the stage of the disease. Makuuchi's criteria are the most widespread to determine if the liver functional reserve is sufficient to survive the surgery<sup>260</sup>. Trans-arterial chemoembolization (TACE) is offered to patients with preserved liver functions and absence of metastasis<sup>261</sup>. Portal vein embolization (PE), on the other hand, is the most spread intervention in patients suffering from chronic hepatitis, with a proven efficacy on

survival<sup>262</sup>. Surgical resection is the treatment of choice in solitary tumors without vascular invasion or distant metastasis<sup>243</sup>. Liver transplantation offer the best survival rates for HCC. Milan's criteria for eligibility for transplantation in PLWH do not differ from those applied to the general population<sup>263</sup>.

Currently, the only medical treatment for advanced HCC with a proven efficacy on survival is sorafenib, a tyrosine-kinase inhibitor<sup>264,265</sup>. The interest about this area is definitely high, with Ras/Raf/MEK/ERK (MAPK), Wnt/catenin and Phospho-inositol-3-kinase (PI3K)/Akt/mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) pathways being the most studied targets<sup>261</sup>. Clinical trials led to the approval of regorafenib and lenvatinib in 2017 and 2018, respectively<sup>264</sup>. Both regorafenib and lenvatinib are oral kinase inhibitors. Cabozantinib, another oral kinase inhibitor, and ramucirumab, an intravenous VEGFR-2 inhibitor, are currently under study<sup>264</sup>. Immune checkpoints inhibitor application in HCC has been studied, with contrasting reports. Nivolumab and pembrolizumab showed a 17-20% rate of response in phase I/II studies and are currently in phase III studies<sup>264-266</sup>. However, Wong et al<sup>267</sup> recently showed that immune checkpoint inhibitors can be responsible for hyper progressive disease in HCC.

More studies are thus necessary to establish the efficacy of these drugs in HCC.

## Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Hodgkin's Lymphoma (HL) is a lymphoid malignancy. HL has a very low incidence rate in general population (0.01%). However, PLWH have an increased risk for all B-cell lymphoproliferative disorders, and HL in particular<sup>268</sup>. It has been demonstrated that HL has a 13-fold higher incidence in PLWH than in general population<sup>269-272</sup>. Moreover, HL is the most common NADC<sup>273</sup>.

Median age at diagnosis is around 30 years, and the highest incidence is around 7 years and a half after the patients are diagnosed with HIV infection<sup>78</sup>. Mortality rate is in steady decrease<sup>78</sup>.

HIV infection leads to a chronic activation of B-lymphocytes, due both to a direct activation of cells bearing CD40L and HIV proteins<sup>268</sup>. HL affects PLWH when their CD4+ T-lymphocyte counts are higher<sup>273</sup>. The exact mechanism is not known, but there are different theories. First of all, the increasing number of CD4+ T-lymphocytes stimulates the activation of all B-lympho-

cytes, and tumoral B-lymphocytes (Hodgkin's Reed-Sternberg cells, HRS) in particular<sup>274,275</sup>. A second theory is the exact opposite. The presence of HRS stimulates the activation of CD4+ T-lymphocytes with inflammatory signals. Therefore, the increase in CD4+ T-lymphocytes is caused by the presence of the cancer<sup>273-275</sup>. The third theory suggests that there is a higher risk for other AIDS-related diseases in PLWH with a low CD4+ T-cell count, thus creating a "competition" with HL<sup>273-275</sup>.

HL is associated with EBV infection. This association is especially important in PLWH. As a matter of fact, only around 30% of the cases of HL in HIV negative individuals are associated with EBV<sup>276,277</sup>. Chronic B-lymphocytes activation due to HIV infection, together with EBV co-infection, leads to immortalization of the B-cells, especially in presence of an immune system dysregulation<sup>268</sup>.

Two histological types of HL are currently known: classic Hodgkin's Lymphoma (CHL) and nodular sclerosis (NSHL). NSHL has a more benign course than CHL. However, despite decreasing mortality, PLWH are affected by less favorable histological types: mixed cellularity (MC) and lymphocyte depleted (LD) HL<sup>78</sup>. Both of them are rich in HRS. Moreover, PLWH are affected by a higher prevalence of B-symptoms, such as fever, night sweats, and/or weight loss > 10% than normal body weight<sup>275</sup>, than the general population.

Currently, screening for HL is not possible. Patients presenting with B-symptoms and swollen lymph nodes in the neck, armpits and/or groin should at least undergo a chest and abdomen CT scan if no other diagnosis is possible. CT scan with iodinated contrast is also used for staging<sup>278-282</sup>.

Bone marrow (BM) biopsy is also needed to define the stage of the disease. BM invasion, as a matter of fact define stage IV of HL, according to Ann Arbor Classification for HL<sup>283,284</sup>.

18-Fluorodeoxyglucose-PET (<sup>18</sup>FDG-PET) is a nuclear medicine technique that use the accelerated aerobic metabolism of cancer cells to highlight their presence, viability, and spread<sup>285-287</sup>. However, it has been demonstrated that in PLWH the radioactive signal in lymph nodes is higher than in HIV-negative individuals<sup>288</sup>. This increased signal is still lower than that of malignant cells, but the unavailability of quantitative PET methods makes it currently impossible to distinguish metabolically active cells because of infection from those metabolically active because of cancer<sup>288</sup>.

Introduction of cART led to an increased survival in PLWH affected by HL<sup>275</sup>. Moreover, the concomitant use of supportive care with granulocyte colony-stimulating factors (G-CSF) and prophylaxis for *Pneumocystis jirovecii* and *Herpes simplex* infections decreased the number and severity of adverse effects<sup>275</sup>.

Standard chemotherapy with doxorubicin, bleomycin, vinblastine, and dacarbazine (ABVD) allows complete remission (CR) in 87% of HL in PLWH, with a relapse rate of 11% after 6-8 cycles of therapy<sup>289</sup>. Therefore, the introduction of cART and G-CSF allowed PLWH to reach similar overall survival to the general population.

More intensive chemotherapeutic regimens for HL exist. Bleomycin, etoposide, doxorubicin, cyclophosphamide, vincristine, procarbazine and prednisone (BEACOPP), is a regimen well tolerated in HIV-positive individuals with HL, with CR in 100% of the cases and a 2-year overall survival of 83%<sup>290</sup>. Mechlorethamine, doxorubicin, vinblastine, vincristine, bleomycin, etoposide and prednisone (Stanford V) with adjuvant radiotherapy has 81% CR but shows lower 2-year overall survival rates than ABVD and BEACOPP<sup>291</sup>.

A regimen with epirubicin, bleomycin, vinorelbine, cyclophosphamide and prednisone (VEBEP), associated with radiotherapy and cART, has a 76% CR rate and 80% overall survival at 30 months<sup>275</sup>.

Immunotherapeutic agents have been studied and are currently studied for a possible application in HL. Rituximab, a monoclonal anti-CD20 antibody, was the first agent studied in this setting<sup>292,293</sup>. However, despite the amazing results obtained in other fields, rituximab does not improve the CR or the overall survival in patients affected by CHL<sup>294</sup>. Nonetheless, rituximab is effective in NSHL, although this type of HL is extremely rare in PLWH<sup>295-298</sup>.

Brentuximab vedotin, an antibody-drug conjugate, targets CD30. This antigen is specifically expressed by CHL cells<sup>299,300</sup>. Its use has been studied in combination with ABVD, showing pulmonary toxicity. It is currently under study in combination with AVD, a bleomycin-free ABVD<sup>301,302</sup>.

Nivolumab and pembrolizumab, immune checkpoint inhibitors targeting PD-1, have been approved for use in CHL. Sintilimab and tislelizumab, other anti-PD1 developed in China, are still under observation, with apparently good results on both CR and overall survival at early timepoints. If the results will be confirmed, these drugs will represent other two weapons against CHL<sup>303</sup>.

Immune checkpoint inhibitors have not been studied in PLWH with CHL. Therefore, their use in this setting should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## Anal Cancer

Anal cancer (AC) is a squamous epithelium carcinoma, localized in the anus. AC is rare in HIV-negative individuals, with a 2 per 100,000 people prevalence<sup>304</sup>. However, in PLWH, and especially males who have sex with males (MSM), AC has a prevalence of 135 per 100,000 people<sup>72</sup>.

AC is related to Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infection, especially with high-risk (HR) HPV serotypes 16 and 18. HR-HPV infect the squamous epithelium of the anus, leading to a neoplastic transformation when the infection is not cleared<sup>73,96,227,305-311</sup>.

PLWH are burdened by a higher incidence of HR-HPV incidence, and the immune dysregulation caused by the HIV infection is correlated to a higher rate of persistence of HPV infection. Moreover, PLWH are more often infected by multiple strains than the general population<sup>309</sup>. Tumorigenesis is often correlated to mutagenesis of tumor suppressor genes, such as p53, deleted in colorectal carcinoma (DCC), and adenomatous polyposis coli (APC) genes<sup>70,312,313</sup>.

Given the association with HPV, recent studies have focused on finding a relationship between vaccination against HPV and AC incidence<sup>314</sup>.

AC can be diagnosed at different stages, defined similarly to cervical cancer stages. Anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN) grade 1 (AIN-1) is a low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion, while AIN-2/3 are high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesions. AIN-1 can spontaneously regress, while AIN-2/3 are malignant neoplasms<sup>229,315,316</sup>.

The Italian Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of HIV-1 Infection<sup>119</sup> suggest to screen MSM PLWH once a year with an anal Papanicolaou (PAP) smear test and to perform high-resolution anoscopy with acetic acid test if the PAP smear test results abnormal. The same screening should be performed in women with an abnormal cervical PAP test<sup>19</sup>. Screening for AC is not currently recommended in the general population<sup>304,308,317-319</sup>.

If both the PAP smear test and the high-resolution anoscopy with acetic acid test result abnormal, a biopsy of the suspected zone should be performed for diagnosis<sup>318,320-323</sup>. MRI is the gold-standard radio-diagnostic test not only to de-

fine the metastatic spread of the disease, but also because the intrinsic high contrast and anatomic resolution of pelvic MRI<sup>126,324</sup>. To assess regional or distant metastatic involvement, 18F-FDG PET/CT has been shown to be ideal<sup>325</sup>.

Treatment of AC can be divided in topical, systemic and surgical. Topical treatment is performed by direct application of therapeutic agents such as 5-fluorouracil and trichloroacetic acid, or by electrocautery<sup>326,327</sup>. However, topical treatment can be only applied in the case of small lesions. Systemic treatment of AC is needed when the cancer has already spread. Different regimen can be used. Combinations of cisplatin or carboplatin with 5-fluorouracil are associated with CR in 34% of patients with an advanced AC<sup>328</sup>. Paclitaxel, alone or in combination with carboplatin, is a successful alternative<sup>329</sup>.

AC is characterized by a high expression of EGFR, therefore it has always been considered an ideal target for EGFR-inhibitors, such as cetuximab and panitumumab. However, the knowledge on EGFR-inhibitors in advanced AC is episodic and limited to case reports or small case series. Therefore, it is difficult to determine their real effectiveness in the setting of advanced AC<sup>328</sup>.

Recently, the effectiveness of pembrolizumab and nivolumab, anti-PD-1, was assessed also in AC<sup>330</sup>. These two drugs showed good results as monotherapy in a phase Ib and phase II study, respectively, raising hopes for their possible future use<sup>330</sup>.

Surgery is effective as local therapy, when the lesion is small, and the cancer has not spread. However, in some cases, a surgical approach can be used in cancers that have spread above the anus reaching the rectum. Surgery is associated with significant morbidity and a high rate of recurrence<sup>74,331-334</sup>.

Further studies are needed to find if an alternative medical approach is possible for PLWH, since this is the population most burdened by AC.

## Conclusions

Cancer has always been an important cause of death in PLWH, becoming the first one after the introduction of cART. Furthermore, after the introduction of cART we assisted to a decrease in frequency of ADCs and an increase in frequency of NADCs.

NADCs are especially frequent in PLWH in a good immune-virologic status, with high CD4+ T-lymphocytes and undetectable viremia. Therefore, it is particularly important for cancer screening

schedules to be followed attentively. The knowledge of the right schedule for each patient and of their risk is essential to promptly diagnose cancer in an early stage, as cancer onset happens around 10 years earlier in PLWH compared to general population. As a matter of fact, too often PLWH are still diagnosed to be affected by late-stage cancers, leading to a worse prognosis even in patients who are well controlled for the HIV infection.

Moreover, too often PLWH are still kept out of clinical trials and use of new molecules, which have less adverse effects and are safer for immunocompromised patients than the molecules used in the past. In conclusion, due to the fact that NADCs represent the most frequent cause of death in PLWH, that their onset is in younger patients who are in a good viro-immunologic status, and that the prognosis in these patients is worse than that of the general population, we think that clinical trials should include PLWH and that new schedules for cancer screening should be proposed.

#### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare they do not have any conflict of interest.

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