The Promise and Perils of CAR-T Therapy: A Comprehensive Review of Clinical Successes

Sechana K. S.*, K. Manasa, R. Lokeswar Reddy, B. Sarika
Department of Pharmacy Practice, Malla Reddy Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
*Corresponding author: Sechana K. S.

ABSTRACT

One kind of immunotherapy that uses the patient's immune system is chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell treatment. It makes T cells that kill cancer by changing genes that target tumour antigens. The extracellular, transmembrane, and intracellular domains are the three major components of CAR. CARs are rapidly developing from first-generation to next-generation CARs as immunotherapy advances. CAR-T treatment is being used to treat a variety of cancer types, including B-cell malignancies. Two CAR-T therapies, axicabtagene ciloleucel and tisagenlecleucel, have received FDA approval. Lisocabtagene maraleucel and Idecabtagene vicleucel are the most recent CAR-T medications to get approval. [1] One of the most innovative new approaches to cancer treatment is chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T cell therapy. Although CAR-T cells have shown excellent clinical responses in some forms of B cell leukaemia or lymphoma, their effectiveness in treating solid tumours and haematological malignancies is limited by a number of issues. Antigen escape, restricted trafficking, limited tumour penetration, severe, sometimes fatal adverse effects, and low anti-tumor efficiency are some of the issues that reduce the effectiveness of CAR-T cell therapy. [8]

KEYWORDS: CAR-T cell therapy, Genetic alteration, Immunotherapy, Chimeric antigen receptor, cancer treatment, T-cells.

INTRODUCTION:

One of the leading causes of death worldwide is cancer. It is well known that T cells, a kind of white blood cell (WBC), may destroy cancer cells. White blood cells known as chimeric antigen receptors (CARs) are designed to attach to the proteins on the surface of cancer cells in order to target them. CAR-T-cell therapy effectively kills cancer cells by using the power of these T cells and CARs. Because CAR-T cells have long-lasting effects and remain in the body after being triggered and injected, they are referred to as the first living medications. Autologous T cells, which are extracted from the patient, genetically modified, and then reintroduced into the same patient, are used in the majority of CAR-T-cell treatments. [1] Strong anti-tumor responses and robust T cell activation result from CAR attachment to target antigens on the cell surface, which occurs without the MHC receptor. [2] Because CAR-T cells may multiply and remain in the patient, their "living drug" property also provides a sustained antitumor response. Monoclonal antibodies are among the few additional medications that possess this characteristic. Notwithstanding the benefits of CAR-T cell therapy, it is important to be aware of its drawbacks, which include the possibility of "on-target, off-tumor" consequences, neurotoxicity, and cytokine release syndrome. To make them safer and more efficient, however, fresh developments in T-cell engineering and CAR design are constantly being created. This special characteristic sets CAR-T cell therapy apart from other treatments, such immune checkpoint inhibitors and cancer vaccines, which typically operate by altering the patient's immune system to combat cancer, but sometimes struggle with their effectiveness and specificity. Additionally, CAR-T cell treatments have shown unprecedented response rates, particularly in some blood cancers. They have been effective in treating B-cell malignancies including refractory acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) when conventional therapies have failed. [3] Chimeric antigen

receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, which uses the immune system's strength to destroy cancer cells, is one of the most promising treatments for the disease. This method alters the patient's T cells' genes to produce a CAR, which transforms any T cell into a tumor-specific T cell. Before being returned to the patient, these cells may be greatly expanded in order to target and eliminate cancer cells, even if the disease has spread to several other areas. Because CAR-T therapy is so effective in treating blood malignancies, the FDA has approved four CAR-T medications for B cell tumours. [4] For patients with recurrent refractory myeloma, CAR-T cell therapy offers an intriguing new immunotherapy option. [9, 14] It has been shown that chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T cell therapy is a highly safe and effective way to treat cancers that begin in B cells. [15]

PROCEDURE

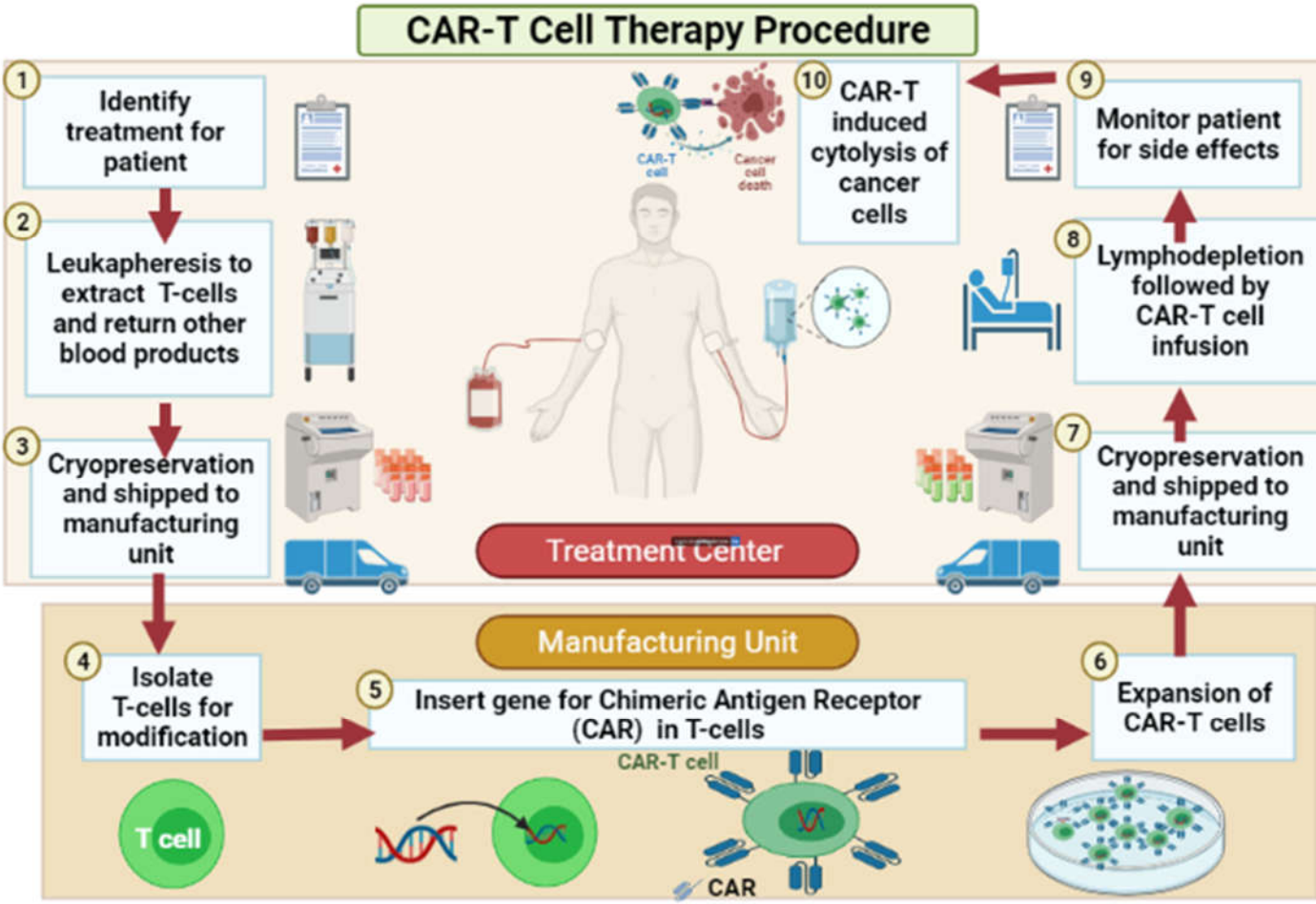

FIGURE:1[1]

The initial step in starting CAR-T treatment is leukapheresis. This therapy involves the patient going to an apheresis machine to get autologous T cells. White blood cells are extracted from the patient's own blood and isolated from the peripheral blood before being placed in a bag. After that, they are frozen so that they may be sent to be turned into other goods. The leukapheresis procedure was repeated the next day if there were insufficient T cells. [1] Following the collection of WBCs, the cells and genetic material for the chimeric antigen receptor are selected by viral transduction. For instance, a lentiviral vector containing the anti-CD19 CAR is used to genetically modify T cells. The cells with their chimeric antigen on the surface are frozen and returned to the treatment location after producing a large number of copies. simultaneously. The patient

had three days of chemotherapy with lymphodepleting medications such as fludarabine or cyclophosphamide prior to receiving the CAR-T cells. In order to create room for the new CAR-T cells and cleanse the immune system, this was done. Lastly, the patients' blood is infused with CAR-T cells. In addition to killing other B cells, CAR-T cells locate and eliminate cancer cells inside the body. CAR-T cell growth is also aided by the cytokines generated by the dead cancer cells. In certain R/R B-cell malignancies, patients who undergo leukopheresis, preparative lymphodepletion, and autologous T-cell infusion intended to produce CD19-targeted CAR-T cells have shown a strong response rate. The primary phases of CAR-T therapy are shown in the image below. [1] T cells from donors' or patients' peripheral blood are genetically modified in vitro to express the chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) in order to create CAR-T cells. Since CAR-T cells may identify certain surface antigens on cancer cells without processing or presenting the antigen, this demonstrates that major histocompatibility complex (MHC) restriction does not impede CAR-T cell antigen identification. They proliferate in vitro after genetic modifications. These genetically altered CAR-T cells are reintroduced into the patients' bodies after lymphodepleting chemotherapy to provide space for the adoptive CAR-T cells. In order to combat cancers, these CAR-T cells quickly multiply after identifying target antigens in vivo. [6]

TOXICITY:

Although the treatment of blood malignancies with CAR-T cell therapy has been highly successful, side effects such CRS, CRES, B cell aplasia, cytopenia, and CRS-related coagulopathy remain a major concern. These issues might be fatal if they are not addressed in a proactive and efficient manner. Investigating the sources of these issues and identifying them early on are crucial to their successful resolution. [6] Despite the remarkable outcomes of CAR-T therapy, there is a

chance that CAR-T-cell infusion may cause some negative side effects. others toxicities may be mild or severe, and others can be fatal or even life-threatening. Neurological toxicities and cytokine release syndrome (CRS) are the most frequent adverse effects of CAR-T-cell treatment. The main symptoms of CRS include fatigue, fever, hypoxia, hypotension, and cytopenia. Both benign and malignant B cells have CD19 on their surface, therefore CAR-T cells that target CD19 have the potential to eliminate both types of cells. The patient may develop B-cell aplasia and hypogammaglobulinemia under certain circumstances. A patient's compromised immune system from previous chemotherapy, a high blood count of CAR-T cells, and peak levels of cytokines are some factors that impact the effectiveness of CAR-T-cell therapy and cause posttreatment toxicity. Because tocilizumab acts on elevated levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6), it is often utilised to treat the more prevalent toxicity associated with CRS. The patient may be prescribed corticosteroids if tocilizumab is not effective enough. In treating CNS toxicity, corticosteroids are often thought to be more beneficial [1,13,16].

Syndrome of cytokine release

Cytokine release syndrome (CRS), a systemic immunological inflammation brought on by CAR-T cell administration, causes the rapid production and release of inflammatory cytokines. One of the most severe adverse effects of CAR-T-cell therapy is CRS. Numerous symptoms, including fever, low blood pressure, low oxygen levels, and brain abnormalities, are often present. You may do a systematic study of blood cytokines and a clinical analysis 21 days after CAR-T cell injection to examine the diagnostic criteria for severe CRS. Additionally, healthcare facilities that provide CAR-T-cell therapy use serum C-reactive protein (CRP) levels as part of their illness management strategy since they are a reliable indicator of how severe CRS is. A humanised monoclonal antibody called

tocilizumab, which targets the IL-6 receptor, was approved by the FDA to treat CRS. Tocilizumab quickly eliminates CRS without affecting the efficacy of CAR-T-cell therapy. The research by Caimi et al. demonstrates that the frequency and severity of CRS cases are reduced when prophylactic tocilizumab is used in conjunction with anti-CD19 CAR-T-cell treatment. According to another study by Jiang et al., if you have severe CRS, you may get disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) after CAR-T-cell therapy. They recommended the use of corticosteroids and immunosuppressive drugs to prevent blood clotting associated with CRS and to properly administer CAR-T therapy. [7]

Neurotoxicity

Brain toxicity Immunoeffector cell-associated neurotoxicity (ICANS), another name for CAR T-cell-induced neurotoxicity, is reported to be severe in around two-thirds of leukaemia and lymphoma patients who receive adoptive CAR T-cell transfer. Although the exact aetiology is yet unknown, general clinical knowledge indicates that worse immune activation and increased blood and CSF cytokine levels are crucial for rupturing the blood-brain barrier and producing neurotoxicity. ICANS may manifest in the clinic as fatigue, dysgraphia, tremors, and expressive aphasia. Global aphasia, seizures, stupor, obtundation, and coma are possible outcomes of these symptoms, which often occur before to or after CRS episodes. [5]

Syndrome of CAR-T-Cell-Related Encephalopathy

Another frequent side effect of CAR-T cell therapy is CRES, or CAR-T cell-related neurotoxicity. It often takes place concurrently with or after CRS. Cerebral oedema, headaches, lightheadedness, disorientation, and seizures are a few symptoms of CRES. The underlying pathogenic mechanisms of CRES remain unclear due to the lack of suitable animal models. CRES may be more likely to occur in patients with severe CRS, many tumours, and an excess of CAR-T cells.

[6]

Two of the most prevalent adverse effects (AEs) of CAR-T cell therapy that continue to impede its utilisation are cytokine release syndrome (CRS) and immune effector cell-associated neurotoxicity syndrome (ICANS). Infections, cytopenia, tumour lysis syndrome (TLS), acute allergies, and other negative events are also difficult. [10]

USES:

Numerous research and clinical trials have examined the effectiveness of different CAR-T therapy molecules in targeting distinct antigen receptors in recent years. For patients with Hodgkin lymphoma (HL), B-NHL, B-ALL, and CLL, targeting CD19 has shown to be very effective. Following the initial favourable outcome for CLL, the response rate declined. The remission rate for R/R ALL was 90%. 70% to 94% of B-ALL patients had complete remission when CAR-T cells that target CD19 were used on them, according to the results. [1] Over the last ten years, immunotherapy techniques, such as CAR T-cell therapy, have significantly improved the clinical prognosis of patients with haematological malignancies. It has been shown that CAR-T cell treatment is effective in treating lymphomas, leukaemia, and multiple myeloma. As a result, over the past five years, the FDA has authorised a number of CAR-T cell products to treat various lymphoma types, including multiple myeloma, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, transformed lymphoma, primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma, and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL). For example, CAR-T cell therapy had very positive results for patients with severe blood cancers that did not respond to chemotherapy or returned after many rounds. [3,12] Use to treat autoimmune conditions including SLE, colitis, and common aspergillosis. [11]

LIMITATIONS

CAR-T therapy is effective enough for blood cancers, but since it inhibits T-cell growth and migration, it cannot be used for solid tumours such juvenile brain

tumours. Limited persistence, an immunosuppressive environment, antigenic escape, and other potentially fatal circumstances after CAR-T-cell injection are additional issues. Additionally, the treatment is expensive; FDA-approved CAR-T therapy molecules range in price from $373,000 to $475,000. Progress is required to treat solid tumours and other disorders in the most effective manner with the fewest possible negative effects. [1] The potential potency of CAR-T cell therapy is shown by the fact that several types of CAR-T cell treatments have been licensed for the treatment of cancer and that patients have remained in remission after the administration of CARs directed against various antigens. Although CAR-based therapies hold great potential for the near future, many issues must be resolved before they can be widely used, particularly for solid tumours. [3]

CONCLUSION:

Four fundamental components make up chimeric antigen receptors (CARs), which are phoney receptors: a hinge region, a transmembrane domain, a target antigen-binding domain, and one or more signalling domains within the cell. This research demonstrates that CAR-T cells have transformed the treatment of several blood cancers, although issues remain. Developing a skilled staff to keep up with this rapidly evolving and complex industry is one of the most difficult tasks. This entails creating fresh educational initiatives.
For CAR-T cells to function, selecting the appropriate antigen is crucial. Tumour cells may reduce the expression of the targeted antigen in order to evade assault by CAR-T cells. CAR-T cells may have off-target effects, harm healthy tissues, and cause illness even when they are directed against the correct antigen. Another major issue is getting CAR-T cells to enter solid tumours, which is made more

difficult by the immunosuppressive environment of the cancer. Additionally, while CAR-T cell treatment may be very effective, it may also have serious side effects, such as neurotoxicity and cytokine release syndrome (CRS). Despite these issues, researchers are developing novel strategies to improve the safety and efficacy of CAR-T therapy in the future.

Research studies should continue to examine both efficacy and toxicity simultaneously while examining potential therapeutic uses for patients. In general, people with illnesses that were previously believed to be incurable have greatly benefited by the availability of CAR-T cell therapy for patients with real or false haematological malignancies. This benefit hasn't, however, been achieved without carefully weighing the therapy's unique hazards against its efficacy. New medications that address these toxicities and low-toxicity designs that maintain therapy efficacy are desperately needed.

CAR-T cell treatment has advantages as well as disadvantages. CAR-T cell therapy will be used in additional clinical contexts outside of blood malignancies when new therapeutic targets are discovered and CAR structures are enhanced. However, there are serious management concerns brought on by the quick commercialisation of CAR-T cell therapy, including the potential for relapse after treatment and the toxicity of the drug. Therefore, if the underlying mechanisms are investigated and these issues are resolved, R/R patients will benefit more from this potential treatment. CAR-T cell therapy is one of several combinatorial approaches now under investigation. All of them seem to be immunotherapies. Additionally, since UCAR-T cells and CAR-NK cells are readily available and inexpensive to produce, they hold great promise for the treatment of cancer. AML, ALL, CLL, MM, HL, and NHL are among the blood malignancies that may be treated using CAR-T-cell therapy. This therapy's primary goal is to identify target antigens unique to tumours and produce CAR-T cells that may be

administered to patients in order to eradicate cancer cells. This technique has been used with varying degrees of success to treat haematological malignancies. However, due to a number of issues, such as neurotoxicity, CRS, and off-tumor toxicity, CAR-T-cell therapy isn't as effective as it may be. To identify the underlying molecular mechanisms and address these issues, further research is needed.

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