

James O. Armitage, MD

Professor, Department of Internal Medicine
University of Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, Nebraska

What are today's key treatment goals in Hodgkin lymphoma?

Hello, my name is Jim Armitage. I am a professor of medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I am often asked, "What are the goals today, the key goals, the important goals, in treating patients with Hodgkin lymphoma?" In this disease today we are in the enviable position of always when you meet a new patient with this disease, regardless of extent of disease, or stage or the health of the patient, the goal that you always hope for is cure of the patient of the Hodgkin lymphoma. In fact, we have reached the point where we are good enough in doing that, that you have to also take into account how to accomplish that goal with the least injury to the patient. Things to think about in that regard are in a young woman you would like to avoid breast radiotherapy, in anybody you would like to minimize radiotherapy to the chest that might lead to late coronary artery disease. In patients who present with good prognostic characteristics and are relatively young, you want to remember that patients are more likely to eventually die of complications of the therapy, usually either another cancer or heart disease, than they are of the lymphoma. Now the one time you might argue that other goals should be taken into account are very old patients. Hodgkin lymphoma in the elderly remains a much more serious disease but even so, there is some chance to cure these patients, particularly when the disease is not widely disseminated and the patient is not terribly ill. And so I start out always hoping that I am going to be able to cure the patient, and try to decide how I can accomplish that goal with the least long-term injury.