A case report of remarkable clinical response to pembrolizumab as first line therapy in metastatic merkel cell carcinoma in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The use of immune checkpoint programmed death-1 (PD1) inhibitor, Pembrolizumab revolutionised the treatment paradigm for Metastatic Merkel Cell Carcinoma (MCC) with their high response rate, durable tumour regression and improved overall survival. Merkel Cell Carcinoma (MCC), an aggressive cutaneous neuroendocrine skin malignancy, strongly associated with the Merkel-cell polyomavirus (MCPyV) and excessive sun exposure, is believed to be immunogenic as it is more prevalent in the elderly and immunocompromised populations. We report the case of an 86-year-old lady with Stage IV Merkel Cell Carcinoma of Right Toe with Nodal and Pleural Metastasis who demonstrated rapid and significant clinical tumour response to Pembrolizumab, evidenced by resolution of the ulcerating lesion on her right foot after receiving 2 cycles. This has greatly improved her overall quality of life. This real life data supports the clinical practice of Pembrolizumab as first line treatment option in metastatic MCC in the elderly population outside of clinical trial setting, for its meaningful response and well tolerated safety profile.

Keywords: Merkle cell carcinoma (MCC), immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI), programmed death-1 (PD-1), programmed death ligand-1 (PDL-1)