

# Ra-SBRT is Potential Immune Adjuvant for Innate Immune Cell Populations in Advance Stage NSCLC Patients

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**Abstract:** Bystander toxicity and tissue fibrosis are the major complications with conventional radiation therapy for cancer patients. In this context, we here propose RapidArc - Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (Ra-SBRT) as a non-invasive and immune adjuvant approach for the successful eradication of advance stage NSCLC. Ra-SBRT is highly focused and capable of destroying tumors with high grade metastatic lesions and spared normal tissues. Follow up of stage 4<sup>th</sup> NSCLC patient revealed that Ra-SBRT is potentially immunogenic which was evident by increased number of iNOS+ Tumor Associated macrophages (M1-TAM), Siglac-8+ eosinophils, basophils and subsequent prolongation of disease free survival of 4<sup>th</sup> stage NSCLC patients by 3 years. This study demonstrated M1 retuning potential of Ra-SBRT which is a pre-requisite of effective management of inoperable and highly metastatic tumors of lung with least or no bystander impact.

**Keywords:** SBRT, lung cancer, iNOS+ macrophage, Eosinophils, Innate Immunity.

## INTRODUCTION

RapidArc- Stereotactic body radiotherapy (Ra-SBRT) is a noninvasive approach [1] for delivering ablative dose to tumor while sparing neighboring normal tissues which are associated with conventional radiotherapy [2-6] of tumor. Due to non-invasive nature of SBRT, it has become as indispensable modality for the management of high grade metastatic NSCLC and lung adenocarcinoma [7-11]. SBRT reduces toxicity to normal tissue and enhances the quality of post treatment life of NSCLC patients [12-14]. With this mandate we conducted a prospective study with NSCLC patients with high grade metastatic lesions. The study was approved on tumor board meeting and all procedures in studies involving human participants were performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments. All patients in this study had around 11 lung lesions, of which six were peripherally located and five were located centrally. Respiratory movement is the major constraints for the therapy outcome of SBRT and requires abdominal compression which improved TCP up to 15% and reduced the volume of PTVs to 42%

and 57% among 6 peripherally and 5 centrally located lung lesions respectively. In peripheral lung lesions, TCP got significantly enhanced to 0.6% for long-term (>5years;  $p < 0.05$ ), and NTCP was significantly reduced in patients with Grade  $\geq$  II pneumonitis (0.2%;  $p < 0.05$ ). Although, in central lung lesions, TCP got enhanced insignificantly however NTCPs got reduced significantly [15] for cartilage necrosis and myelitis. Post treatment follow up of patient using positron emission tomography fused with computed tomography up to 12 months post treatment revealed no residual tumors in the treatment beds of any of the patient analyzed as per the Response Evaluation Criteria. However one patient developed asymptomatic lung pneumonitis (ALP) in the dose fall-off region during his six-month follow-up. However, his ALP decreased extensively over the next six months and patient survived for more than three years. The primary outcome criterion of this study was to evaluate response of NSCLC patients toward SBRT treatment and to compare tumor control. The secondary outcome criterion was to compare overall survival post therapy. Tumor control Probability (TCP) was calculated using Poisson's linear quadratic (PLQ) cell survival model [16,17] and normal tissue complication probability (NTCP) was calculated using Lyman-Kutcher-Burman (LKB) cell survival model [18-21]. Internal treatment volume (ITV) within which the tumor moves within thoracic region was also monitored. Based on delineating ITV, SBRT was

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delivered to tumors [15] which reduced bystander toxicity by 15%. Combining RapidArc technique with SBRT reduced the exposure time and toxicity to normal tissues with rapid exponential dose fall-off than [22-25] conventional radiotherapy techniques. On the basis of this; we analyzed the therapeutic influence of RapidArc in SBRT for NSCLC. In the study we included TCP and NTCP prospectively for yielding better clinical outcome. In our study, treatment set-up variations were restricted with abdominal compression device and patients were comfortable for 6 MV (CF) at a dose rate of 600 MU/min. Biological equivalent dose was reduced by 0.5% and exposure time was increased from 2 min to 10 min for delivering 10Gy per fraction [26] for the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cell survival probability curve analysis from NSCLC patients; delivered with 50Gy by SBRT revealed TCP  $95.70\pm 0.12\%$  for 3-year and  $92.37\pm 0.19\%$  for long term on peripherally located lung lesions (Table 1). Similarly, TCP was  $95.76\pm 0.06\%$  for 3-years and  $92.48\pm 0.09\%$  for centrally located lung lesions. Tissue complication

probability for the patients which underwent 6MV RapidArc–SBRT was also recorded. TCP for high grade Pnuemonitis was  $1.00\pm 0.25\%$  and  $0.96\pm 0.51\%$ ; Pathologic rib fracture was  $36.98\pm 32.64\%$  and  $36.47\pm 26.83\%$ ; Esophagitis was  $0.25\pm 0.10\%$  and  $2.40\pm 2.30\%$  on peripherally and centrally located lung lesions respectively. Necrosis of cartilage in trachea was negligible on peripheral and  $61.30\pm 11.33\%$  (Table 1) on centrally located lung lesions respectively. Interestingly we could not find any correlation of percarditis on both peripherally and centrally located lung lesions in these patients. Most interestingly and following our expectation, follow-up of RapidArc–SBRT treated patients revealed no residual tumors in the treatment beds of any of the NSCLC patient upto one year as per the response evaluation criteria. During follow up, one patient with peripheral lung lesion, developed asymptomatic lung pneumonitis (ALP) during follow-up but cured completely afterward. TCP predictions were further correlated with survival of patient surviving for more than 3-years. Out of 20 patients of 4<sup>th</sup> stage NSCLC cases, we followed up with one 50-year-old patient who initially had lung adenocarcinoma of 2 cm × 2 cm × 2.5 cm in size

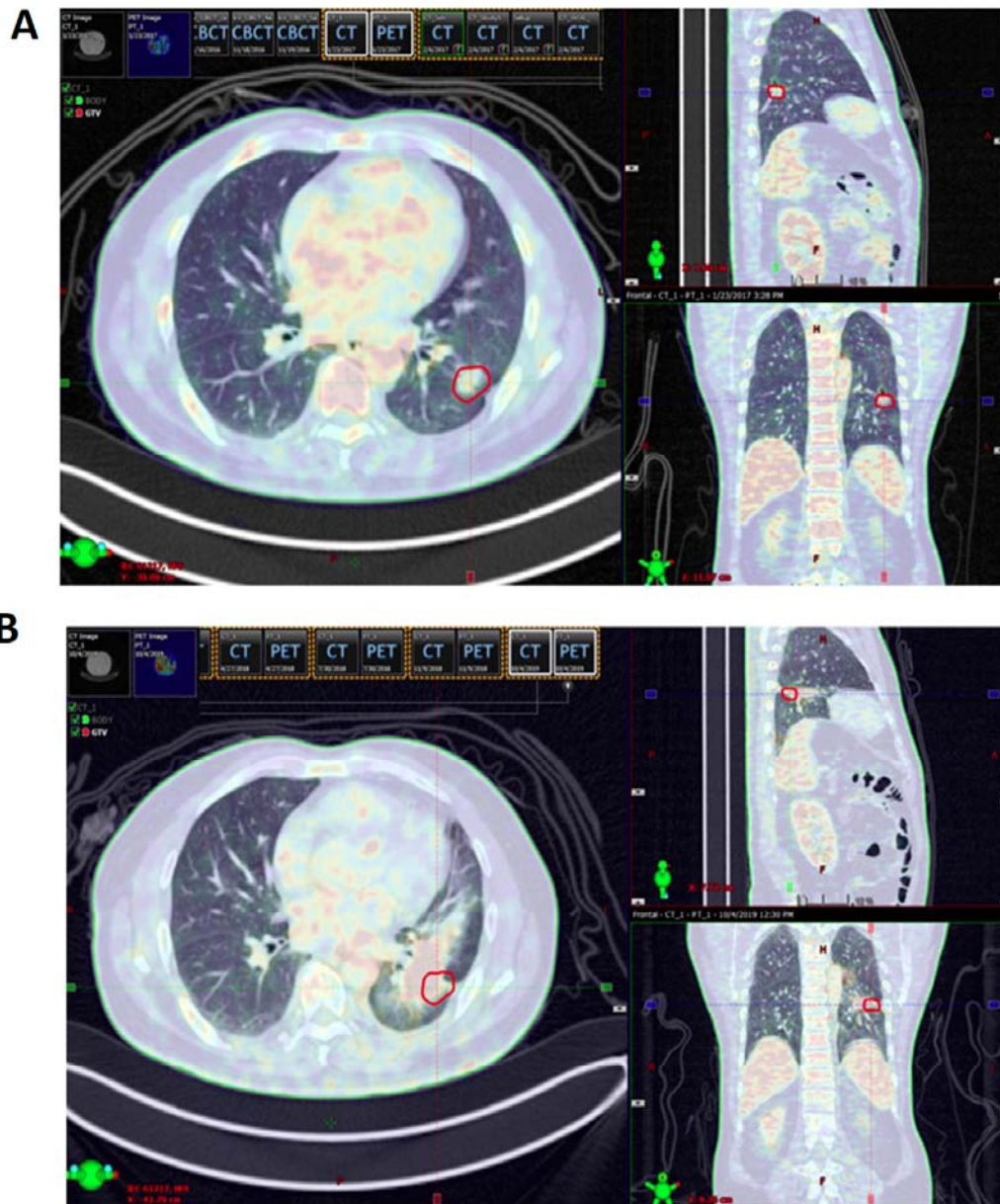
**Table 1: Correlation Analysis of Tumor Control Probability and Normal Tissue Complication Probability for RapidArc Plans on Peripherally and Centrally Located Lung Lesions of NSCLC Patients ( n=20)**

Tumor Control Probability							
Target Volume	Local Control	Peripheral Lesions			Central Lesions		
		6 MV (CF)	6 MV (FFF)	10 MV (FFF)	6 MV (CF)	6 MV (FFF)	10 MV (FFF)
GTV	3 Years	$95.70\pm 0.12$	$95.66\pm 0.10$ (p = 0.49)	$95.85\pm 0.16$ (p = 0.01)	$95.76\pm 0.06$	$95.76\pm 0.04$ (p = 1.00)	$95.70\pm 0.08$ (p = 0.12)
GTV	Long-term	$92.37\pm 0.19$	$92.32\pm 0.16$ (p = 0.53)	$92.62\pm 0.27$ (p = 0.01)	$92.48\pm 0.09$	$92.52\pm 0.10$ (p = 0.53)	$92.47\pm 0.15$ (p = 0.79)
Normal Tissue Complication Probability							
Critical Organ	End Point	Peripheral Lesions			Central Lesions		
		6 MV (CF)	6 MV (FFF)	10 MV (FFF)	6 MV (CF)	6 MV (FFF)	10 MV (FFF)
Lung	Pnuemonitis, Grade - ≥II	$1.00\pm 0.25$	$0.99\pm 0.24$ (p = 0.01)	$1.04\pm 0.27$ (p = 0.01)	$0.96\pm 0.51$	$0.97\pm 0.52$ (p = 0.70)	$0.98\pm 0.51$ (p = 0.02)
Rib	Pathologic fracture	$36.98\pm 32.64$	$37.12\pm 32.49$ (p = 0.68)	$37.85\pm 32.72$ (p = 0.08)	$36.47\pm 26.83$	$47.87\pm 19.59$ (p = 0.31)	$36.13\pm 26.91$ (p = 0.59)
Heart	Pericarditis	$0.00\pm 0.00$	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$0.00\pm 0.00$	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)
Trachea	Cartilage necrosis	$0.00\pm 0.00$	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$61.30\pm 11.33$	$60.97\pm 11.23$ (p = n.a)	$62.75\pm 11.91$ (p = n.a)
Esophagus	Esophagitis, Grade - ≥II	$0.25\pm 0.10$	$0.26\pm 0.10$ (p = 0.62)	$0.28\pm 0.12$ (p = 0.19)	$2.40\pm 2.30$	$2.37\pm 2.39$ (p = 0.85)	$2.77\pm 2.98$ (p = 0.40)
Spinal Cord	Necrotic Myelitis	$0.00\pm 0.00$	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$0.00\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$26.76\pm 0.00$	$30.48\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)	$31.46\pm 0.00$ (p = n.a)

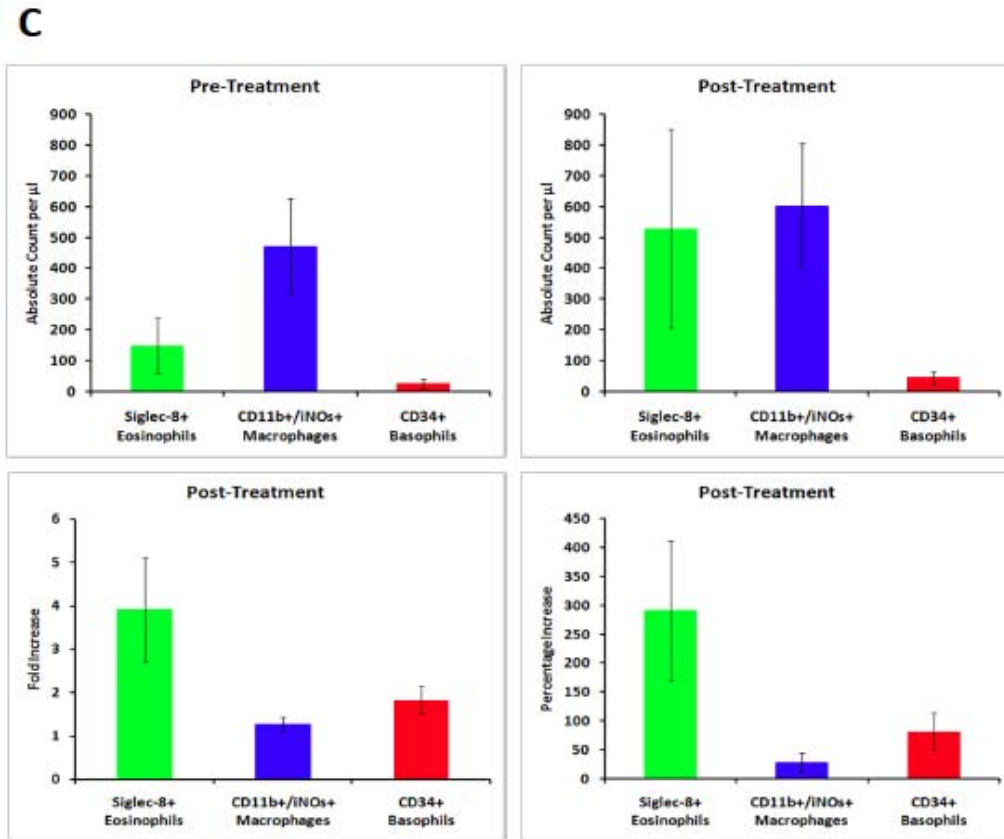
affecting the left lower lobe. This was accompanied with aorto-pulmonary and mediastinal nodes measuring 1 cm each. The patient was referred for SBRT for treating the lung lesion and metastatic nodes. PET / CT scan of this patient during his follow up 30 month post treatment revealed no pleural or pericardial effusion (Figure 1A). Large airways, heart, great vessels and other mediastinal structures appeared normal with no significant abnormal FDG uptake. Most interestingly the lung of this patient had ill-defined fibro-consolidative lesion (Figure 1B).

We have recently demonstrated that Radiation therapy (RT) bears potential of orchestrating innate and adaptive immunity against established tumor of pancreas [27,28] in neo adjuvant setting. Our studies

have amply demonstrated that iNOs+ effector macrophages (M1-TAM) are indispensable for RT triggered retuning of tumor microenvironment and subsequent rejection of established and refractory tumors of [27] of pancreas. On the basis of these studies, we anticipated that RapidArc-SBRT would also enhance the density of iNOs+ M1 effector macrophages and enhance immunity of these patients for effective tumor control. Indeed, analysis of all patients which have undergone Ra-SBRT (with high<sup>TCP</sup> / low<sup>NTCP</sup>) revealed a clinical correlation with increase in the number of iNOS+ M1-TAM [27,28] and Siglac-8+ Eosinophil [29] populations 6 months post treatment (Figure 1C and Table 2) in these patients which are potentially anti-tumorous in nature. Since M1 TAM and



(Figure 1) continued



**Figure 1:** Ra-SBRT is potentially immunogenic and promotes tumor immune rejection in the NSCLC patients.

Shown here is The PET-CT scan of patients before (A) and during follow up (B) 30 months post treatment (C) Ra-SBRT enhances tumor reactive innate cell populations in NSCLC patients. Shown here is mean of absolute and % increase in the iNOs+ M1 effector macrophages, Eosinophils and Basophils in NSCLC patients during their follow up. All values were normalized against non-irradiated control patients.

Siglec-8+ eosinophils are potentially immunogenic in nature therefore we believe that elevated number of iNOs+ macrophage [30,31] Siglec-8+ eosinophils [32] populations together could have promoted immunogenic responses in these patients accounting for high TCP in Ra-SBRT patients.

In summary our finding suggest that RapidArc-SBRT is one potential cancer directed immune therapeutic modality and have tremendous potential for rescuing patients from death from most aggressive NSCLC.

**METHODS**

The work described has been carried out in accordance with the code of Ethics of the World Medical Association as per Declaration of Helsinki. CT datasets were acquired using helical CT machine Biograph (Siemens Healthcare, Erlangen, Germany), at a random phase of shallow breath. These CT datasets were used as baseline datasets for contouring and planning. Gross tumor volumes (GTVs) were contoured by an expert radiation oncologist. Two more CT datasets were acquired at deep inspirational and

**Table 2: RapidArc-SBRT Promotes Immune Reconstitution in the NSCLC Patients (n=20) during their Follow Up**

	Mean		P-value
	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment	
Siglec-8+Eosinophils	150.00	529.50	<0.05
iNOs+ Macrophages	474.00	603.50	<0.05
CD34+ Basophils	27.13	46.00	<0.05



expirational breath hold phases. GTVs were separately contoured on these datasets which were fused together with baseline datasets to generate internal treatment volume (ITV) which was further expanded with 3-mm margin to delineate planning treatment volume (PTV). Critical organs like lungs, ribs, esophagus, trachea, spinal cord, and heart were contoured on baseline CT dataset. The prescribed dose of 50Gy were delivered in 5 fractions to PTV using RapidArc Technique with two co-planar 360° arcs (first in clockwise - 181° to 179° and second in anti-clockwise - 179° to 181°). RapidArc was delivered to patient with 6 MV conventionally-flattened (CF) photon beam of the linear accelerator TrueBeamSTx platform Linac (Varian Medical Systems, Palo Alto, CA) at the maximum dose rate of 600 Monitor units per minute (MU/min), after prospective comparison with 6 MV flattening-filter-free (FFF) and 10 MV (FFF) having maximum dose rate of 1400 and 2400 MU/min respectively. Radiobiological efficacy of the RapidArc plan was evaluated on the basis of TCP and NTCP which were obtained from dose-volume histograms. PET-CT image of the patients who came for follow up was done (Figure 1B) from vertex to mid-thigh were after intravenous injection of 185 MBq of F-18 fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) on dedicated Biograph mCT scanner. Fusion images of positron emission tomography (PET) and computed tomography (CT) were obtained and reported. For the analysis of myeloid cell compartment of all 20 patients enrolled for the study was done from peripheral blood. PBMC were purified from the blood using Ficoll based method and various cells were purified by MACS based separation system (Miltenyi Biotec) as per manufacture instruction.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

H.P. Conceived the idea and supervised the study; AC; conducted the clinical analysis including recruitment of the patients; S.J. Recorded PET-CT scan of the patients and treated them with SBRT; A.J. Edited the manuscript.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that no conflict of interest exists.

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