

A safety and feasibility trial of ^{131}I -MIBG in newly diagnosed high-risk neuroblastoma: A Children's Oncology Group study

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Abstract

Introduction: ^{131}I -meta-iodobenzylguanidine (^{131}I -MIBG) is effective in relapsed neuroblastoma. The Children's Oncology Group (COG) conducted a pilot study (NCT01175356) to assess tolerability and feasibility of induction chemotherapy followed by ^{131}I -MIBG therapy and myeloablative busulfan/melphalan (Bu/Mel) in patients with newly diagnosed high-risk neuroblastoma.

Methods: Patients with MIBG-avid high-risk neuroblastoma were eligible. After the first two patients to receive protocol therapy developed severe sinusoidal obstruction syndrome (SOS), the trial was re-designed to include an ^{131}I -MIBG dose escalation (12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg), with a required 10-week gap before Bu/Mel administration. Patients who completed induction chemotherapy were evaluable for assessment of ^{131}I -MIBG feasibility; those who completed ^{131}I -MIBG therapy were evaluable for assessment of ^{131}I -MIBG + Bu/Mel feasibility.

Results: Fifty-nine of 68 patients (86.8%) who completed induction chemotherapy received ^{131}I -MIBG. Thirty-seven of 45 patients (82.2%) evaluable for ^{131}I -MIBG + Bu/Mel received this combination. Among those who received ^{131}I -MIBG after revision of the study design, one patient per dose level developed severe SOS. Rates of moderate to severe SOS at 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg were 33.3%, 23.5%, and 25.0%, respectively. There was one toxic death. The ^{131}I -MIBG and ^{131}I -MIBG+Bu/Mel feasibility rates at the 15 mCi/kg dose level designated for further study were 96.7% (95% CI: 83.3%-99.4%) and 81.0% (95% CI: 60.0%-92.3%).

Abbreviations: ^{131}I -MIBG, ^{131}I -meta-iodobenzylguanidine; ASCR, autologous stem cell rescue; Bu/Mel, busulfan/melphalan; CEM, carboplatin, etoposide, and melphalan; COG, Children's Oncology Group; CR, complete response; EBRT, external beam radiation therapy; EFS, event-free survival; MIBG, meta-iodobenzylguanidine; MTD, maximum tolerated dose; PBSC, peripheral blood stem cells; PD, progressive disease; PR, partial response; SE, standard error; SOS, sinusoidal obstruction syndrome; VGPR, very good partial response.

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Conclusion: This pilot trial demonstrated feasibility and tolerability of administering ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by myeloablative therapy with Bu/Mel to newly diagnosed children with high-risk neuroblastoma in a cooperative group setting, laying the groundwork for a cooperative randomized trial (NCT03126916) testing the addition of ¹³¹I-MIBG during induction therapy.

KEYWORDS

Bu/Mel, high risk, MIBG, neuroblastoma

1 | INTRODUCTION

Metastatic neuroblastoma continues to be a therapeutic challenge, despite improvements in event-free survival (EFS) with induction chemotherapy, surgery, myeloablative therapy with autologous stem cell rescue (ASCR), local radiation, differentiation therapy, and immunotherapy.^{1,2} Inadequate response is seen in ~20% of patients before myeloablative therapy and predicts a lower EFS.¹⁻⁷ Novel therapies early in treatment are required to improve survival.

Meta-iodobenzylguanidine (MIBG), a norepinephrine analog taken up by 90% of neuroblastomas, is concentrated selectively in sympathetic nervous tissue. MIBG labeled with iodine-131 (¹³¹I-MIBG) has activity against relapsed and newly diagnosed neuroblastoma.⁸⁻¹¹ Early-phase trials of ¹³¹I-MIBG in relapsed/refractory neuroblastoma showed response rates up to 37%^{7,12} with dose-limiting hematologic toxicity abrogated by ASCR.⁷ A single-institution study tested combining lower dose ¹³¹I-MIBG with chemotherapy induction.¹³

The feasibility of combining ¹³¹I-MIBG with myeloablative carboplatin, etoposide, and melphalan (CEM) after induction has been demonstrated in relapsed/refractory patients in phase 1 and 2 studies.¹⁴⁻¹⁹ A few single-institution studies of relapsed/refractory neuroblastoma also followed ¹³¹I-MIBG with a Bu/Mel consolidation.²⁰⁻²² Based on a European randomized trial showing that BuMel consolidation after chemotherapy induction resulted

in superior EFS compared with CEM,⁴ we selected Bu/Mel for our study. We hypothesized that the optimal time to treat with ¹³¹I-MIBG would be in first response, and therefore designed the current trial, which is the first cooperative group trial inserting ¹³¹I-MIBG as part of induction therapy. This Children's Oncology Group (COG) study for patients with newly diagnosed high-risk neuroblastoma was designed to assess the tolerability and feasibility of delivering ¹³¹I-MIBG at end-induction followed by a consolidation regimen of myeloablative Bu/Mel and local external beam radiation therapy (EBRT) in a multi-institution setting.

2 | PATIENTS AND METHODS

Accrual to COG ANBL09P1 (NCT01175356) occurred from 2011 to 2015 at 23 institutions, including those with ($n = 13$) and without ($n = 10$) ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy administration capability. This trial was approved by the Pediatric Central Institutional Review Board of the National Cancer Institute and local institutional review boards. Written informed consent (and assent as appropriate) was obtained. Data cutoff for analyses was September 30, 2019.

Eligible patients were 1-30 years old at the time of diagnosis and had high-risk neuroblastoma due to: tumor MYCN amplification with International Neuroblastoma Staging System stages 2-4; stage 3 disease with centrally confirmed unfavorable histology²³ and >18 months

of age at diagnosis; or stage 4 disease diagnosed at age >18 months; or stage 4 disease and age 12-18 months with tumors demonstrating centrally confirmed unfavorable biology (MYCN amplification, unfavorable histology and/or DNA index = 1). Eligibility requirements included normal organ function, confirmation of MIBG-avid disease, and the ability to collect a minimum of 4 million CD34⁺ peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC) per kg body weight. In order to allow for enrollment from smaller centers that may not have ready access to MIBG scans, documentation of MIBG avidity was not required before enrollment but had to be confirmed before induction cycle 2. Patients with MIBG non-avid tumors were declared ineligible and removed from protocol therapy. For those who remained on study, subsequent MIBG scans were required prior to surgery, at the end of induction, just prior to myeloablative Bu/Mel, post consolidation, and at the end of post consolidation treatment.

All patients received induction chemotherapy (Figure 1A). Patients on the original iteration of the protocol (Iteration 1) then received 18 mCi/kg ¹³¹I-MIBG (Jubilant Draximage, Quebec, Canada) with vincristine and irinotecan followed by ASCR ($\geq 2 \times 10^6$ CD34⁺ cells/kg) two weeks later.²⁴ Patients received myeloablative Bu/Mel ≥ 5 weeks later. Patients could proceed to ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy and Bu/Mel regardless of Curie score documented prior to these interventions. Unacceptable sinusoidal obstruction syndrome (SOS; defined below in the Statistical methods section) was observed in the first two patients who received vincristine, irinotecan, and ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by Bu/Mel. Therefore, the protocol was amended and remaining previously enrolled patients were taken off protocol therapy.

Patients enrolled following a major protocol amendment (protocol Iteration 2) received induction chemotherapy followed by ¹³¹I-MIBG alone, with ASCR 2 weeks later in cohorts of 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg (444, 555, or 666 MBq/kg) (Figure 1B). Although toxicity was being evaluated at the 15 and 18 mCi/kg dose levels, patients were assigned to the next lower ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level that had already been shown to be safe. This permitted ongoing assessment of the feasibility of administering protocol therapy; however, as a result, different numbers of patients were enrolled at each ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level. Patients unable to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy due to a pause in dose assignments while safety assessments were being performed were removed from protocol therapy; those patients were not included in the assessment of feasibility. Patients who received an MIBG dose that varied by more than 10% of the assigned dose were removed from protocol therapy.

Subsequent myeloablative Bu/Mel with ASCR occurred at least 10 weeks from ¹³¹I-MIBG administration. All patients who received ¹³¹I-MIBG had an indwelling urinary catheter for bladder protection, potassium iodide as thyroid protection for six weeks, and underwent whole-body dosimetry.¹⁸ A complete disease evaluation was performed before and upon completion of consolidation therapy per International Neuroblastoma Response Criteria.²⁵ Post-consolidation immunotherapy with anti-GD2 monoclonal antibody and isotretinoin was recommended for all patients.²⁶

3 | STATISTICAL METHODS

Feasibility for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG and feasibility for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by Bu/Mel were determined using patients from both iterations of the protocol. The feasibility rate for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG was defined as the number of patients with MIBG-avid disease assigned to an ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level at induction cycle 5 to whom ¹³¹I-MIBG was administered divided by the total number of patients with MIBG-avid disease who could have been assigned to an ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level. The denominator included patients who went off protocol therapy before receiving a dose assignment, but excluded those who could not continue due to periods of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy suspension for toxicity evaluation. The ¹³¹I-MIBG with Bu/Mel feasibility rate was defined as the proportion of patients with MIBG-avid disease who received the assigned ¹³¹I-MIBG, then Bu/Mel divided by the number of patients who received ¹³¹I-MIBG and met criteria to receive myeloablative Bu/Mel. If patients developed progressive disease (PD) prior to Bu/Mel, they were not eligible for transplant and not included in the feasibility determination as patients with PD were not eligible to receive myeloablative Bu/Mel. The treatment was deemed feasible if the upper bound of a 95% confidence interval on the ¹³¹I-MIBG feasibility rate and the ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel feasibility rate were each $\geq 80\%$. We also assessed the financial impact of traveling for ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy by comparing the total cost of travel, housing, food, and lost wages for patients who traveled to another institution to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG to an estimated annual per capita income. Treatment was considered feasible if the total costs were < 10% of total income, deemed as acceptable, although there is no established standard percentage.

Tolerability was determined only for patients enrolled in Iteration 2, both for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG and for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by Bu/Mel. The study incorporated a dose-finding component to determine the maximum tolerated dose (MTD) of ¹³¹I-MIBG in cohorts of up to six patients using a modified rolling six design, as described above and in Figure 1B. Tolerability of the regimen at each dose level could be further assessed in cohorts of up to 18 patients. Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events version 4.0 was used to assess toxicity. A composite definition of SOS¹⁹ defined moderate SOS as serum total bilirubin > 2.0 mg/dL, plus ≥ 2 of the following findings from the beginning of ¹³¹I-MIBG to within 28 days after transplantation: hepatomegaly with right upper quadrant pain, ascites, or weight gain >5% above baseline. Severe SOS was defined as above plus a specific organ failure: grade 4 hepatic failure; or grade 3 hypoxia for >48 hours, with ventilatory support not clearly attributable to another cause; or grade 3 creatinine or grade 4 renal dysfunction not clearly attributable to another cause. In addition, combined toxic death rate associated with ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel therapy, neutrophil engraftment rate after ¹³¹I-MIBG and after Bu/Mel, and grade 4 renal, pulmonary, and cardiac toxicity were monitored. If at any time ≥ 4 patients at any ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level who were evaluable for the tolerability of ¹³¹I-MIBG experienced a severe toxicity as defined above, from start of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy through day +28 post myeloablative

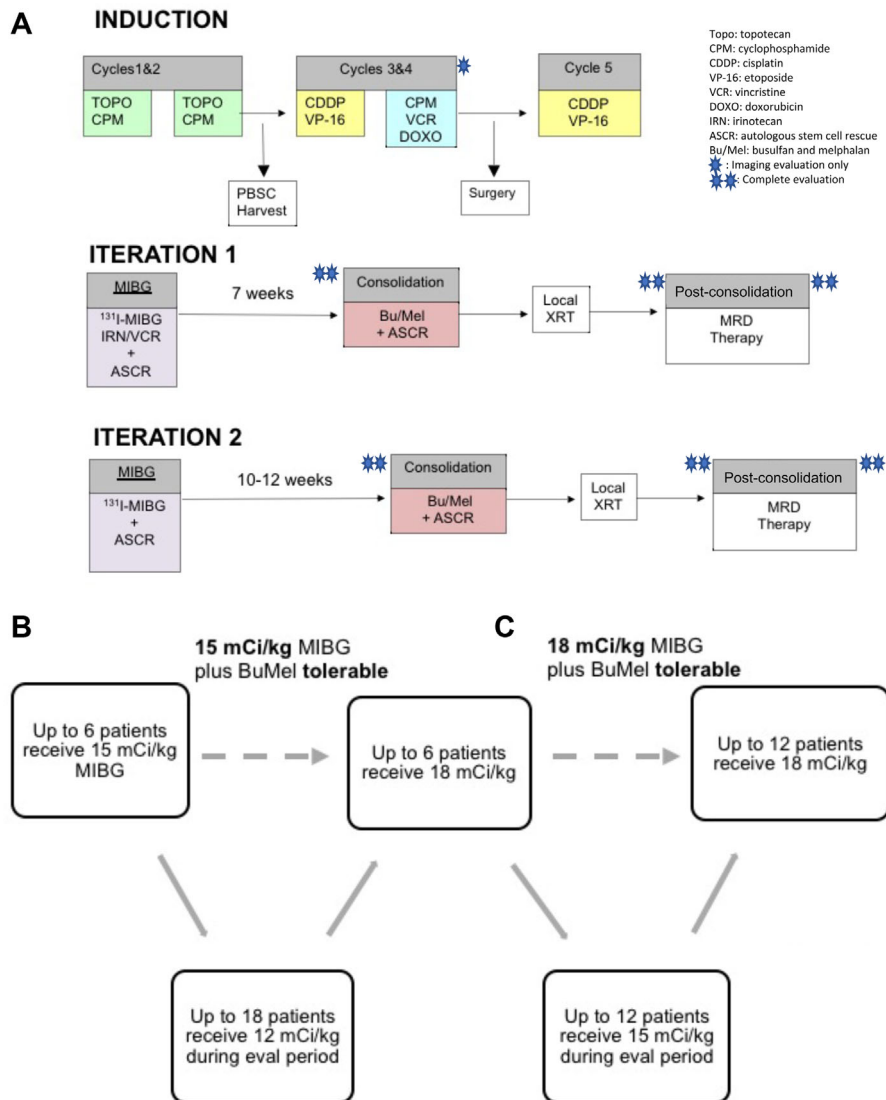


FIGURE 1 Treatment plan

(A) Treatment schema. Patients received two cycles of topotecan ($1.2 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 5 \text{ days}$) and cyclophosphamide ($400 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 5 \text{ days}$) (each cycle lasting 21 days assuming blood count recovery), followed by PBSC harvest; cycle 3 of cisplatin ($50 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 4 \text{ days}$) and etoposide ($200 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 3 \text{ days}$); cycle 4 of cyclophosphamide ($2100 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 2 \text{ days}$), doxorubicin ($25 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 3 \text{ days}$), and vincristine (the lower dose of $0.67 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose}$ OR $0.022 \text{ mg/kg/dose} \times 3 \text{ days}$) followed by tumor imaging and MIBG scan and attempted surgical resection; and cycle 5 cisplatin and etoposide. Patients on the first iteration of the protocol (Iteration 1) then received ^{131}I -MIBG at 18 mCi/kg along with vincristine ($2 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 1 \text{ day}$; max 2 mg) and irinotecan ($50 \text{ mg/m}^2/\text{dose} \times 5 \text{ days}$; max 100 mg) followed 2 weeks later by ASCR, then 5 weeks later by myeloablative Bu/Mel consolidation plus ASCR. Patients enrolled on Iteration 2 received ^{131}I -MIBG (3–6 weeks from the start of cycle 5) at either 12 mCi/kg , 15 mCi/kg , or 18 mCi/kg (without vincristine or irinotecan) using a modified rolling six design, followed by ASCR 2 weeks later. A mandatory break of 10–12 weeks from ^{131}I -MIBG infusion was required prior to myeloablative Bu/Mel consolidation plus ASCR. Patients received intravenous busulfan every six hours for 16 doses from day -6 to day -3 [with mandatory pharmacokinetic (PK)-guided dosing] and melphalan (140 mg/m^2) on day -1 . After recovery from acute toxicities, patients received external beam radiation therapy (21.6 Gy) to the primary site and up to five MIBG-avid sites,¹ followed by post-consolidation therapy of the investigator's choice, though anti-GD2 antibody therapy was recommended.

(B) Dose escalation plan. The initial cohort of patients in Iteration 2 received 15 mCi/kg ^{131}I -MIBG followed by Bu/Mel. While determining safety at this dose, subsequent patients received ^{131}I -MIBG at a dose of 12 mCi/kg upon completion of induction chemotherapy. Once 15 mCi/kg ^{131}I -MIBG was determined to be safe, a dose of 18 mCi/kg ^{131}I -MIBG was similarly assessed. Although toxicities associated with 18 mCi/kg ^{131}I -MIBG followed by Bu/Mel were being evaluated, subsequent patients received a dose of 15 mCi/kg . A maximum of 18 patients were to be treated with ^{131}I -MIBG plus Bu/Mel on any dose level. Although therapy tolerability was being assessed, up to 18 patients could receive 12 mCi/kg of ^{131}I -MIBG, or the highest proven tolerable dose

TABLE 1 Patient characteristics

	n (%) ^a		
	Eligible (n = 98)	Iteration 1 (n = 11)	Iteration 2 (n = 87)
Sex (M:F)	59:39	5:6	54:33
Median age in months (range)	43.3 (14.7-143.6)	37.8 (16.8-135.1)	47.8 (14.7-143.6)
INSS 2/3	6 (6.1%)	1 (9.1%)	5 (5.7%)
INSS 4	92 (93.9%)	10 (90.9%)	82 (94.3%)
MYCN			
Amplified	24 (27.9%)	3 (27.3%)	21 (28.0%)
Non-amplified	62 (72.1%)	8 (72.7%)	54 (72.0%)
Unknown	12	0	12
Grade			
Differentiated	1 (1.2%)	1 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Undifferentiated/poorly differentiated	84 (98.8%)	8 (88.9%)	76 (100.0%)
Unknown	13	2	11
INPC			
Favorable	3 (3.5%)	2 (22.2%)	1 (1.3%)
Unfavorable	82 (96.5%)	7 (77.8%)	75 (98.7%)
Unknown	13	2	11
Median Curie score at diagnosis (range)	20 (0-28) ^b	17 (1-28)	20 (0-28) ^c

^aPercentages calculated based on patients with data available for the given characteristic.

^bTwo patients found to be non-avid for MIBG, N = 96.

^cN = 85.

Bu/Mel ASCR, then the treatment would be deemed not tolerable at that ¹³¹I-MIBG dose level.

Exploratory aims included assessment of the relationship of SOS occurrence to busulfan exposure and to whole-body ¹³¹I-MIBG radiation dose.²⁷ In addition, Curie score^{5,28} at diagnosis and end-induction, response rate²⁵ at end-induction and end-consolidation, and EFS were determined. For the analyses of EFS, time to event was calculated from the date of study enrollment to the first occurrence of relapse, progression, second malignancy, or death; patients without event were censored on the date of last contact. EFS estimates were generated per Kaplan-Meier²⁹ with standard error (SE) per Peto³⁰ and reported as the estimate ± SE.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Patient characteristics

A total of 99 patients were enrolled (Figure 2). Eleven patients were enrolled on Iteration 1 and 88 patients on Iteration 2. One patient on Iteration 2 was deemed ineligible (incorrect diagnosis). The characteristics of the remaining patients are shown (Table 1). Sixty-eight patients were evaluable for the feasibility of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy (3 from Iteration 1 and 65 from Iteration 2), and 45 patients were evaluable for the feasibility of ¹³¹I-MIBG plus Bu/Mel (two in Iteration 1; 43

in Iteration 2). Thirty-five patients were evaluable for tolerability of ¹³¹I-MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel (all from Iteration 2). The required number of stem cells was successfully harvested for all patients. Fourteen patients on Iteration 2 subsequently enrolled on COG ANBL0032 and received chimeric anti-GD2 monoclonal antibody post-consolidation.

Of the 11 patients enrolled on Iteration 1 (Figure 2), three received ¹³¹I-MIBG; however, the first two patients developed severe SOS with myeloablative Bu/Mel and the trial was suspended. The third patient treated with ¹³¹I-MIBG during Iteration 1 was therefore removed from protocol therapy, as were the eight patients who had been enrolled prior to trial suspension who had not yet received ¹³¹I-MIBG. The protocol was amended as described above, and 87 eligible patients were enrolled during Iteration 2. Of these, 31 did not receive ¹³¹I-MIBG. This included 22 patients not included in feasibility assessment (20 patients who were not assigned an ¹³¹I-MIBG dose during periods of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy suspension for toxicity evaluation and two patients whose tumors were MIBG non-avid), in addition to nine patients who did not receive ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy due to physician or parent preference (Figure 2) and were included in the feasibility assessment. Thus, 65 patients from Iteration 2 (56 patients who received ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy plus the nine patients above who did not) were evaluable for feasibility of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy. Of the 56 who actually received ¹³¹I-MIBG, three patients received a dose higher than the protocol-specified dose, and were therefore inevaluable for tolerability and did not proceed

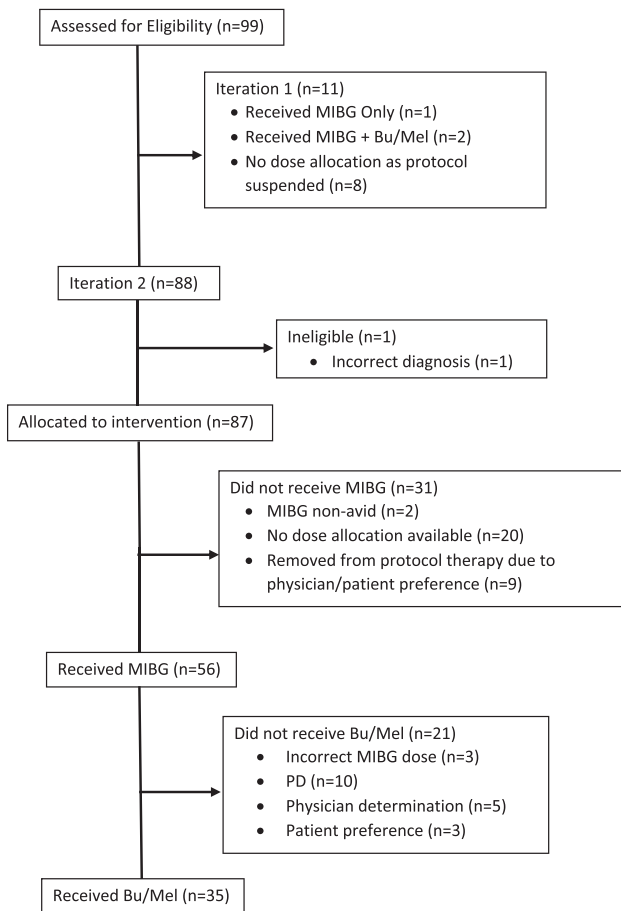


FIGURE 2 Consort diagram for ANBL09P1. Feasibility evaluations included eligible patients from Iteration 1 ($n = 11$) and Iteration 2 ($n = 87$). Tolerability evaluations only included patients from Iteration 2. Of eligible patients, 68 were evaluable for feasibility of ^{131}I -MIBG (3 from Iteration 1 and 65 from Iteration 2) and 45 for feasibility of ^{131}I -MIBG + Bu/Mel (2 from Iteration 1 and 43 from Iteration 2). Patients from Iteration 2 evaluable for tolerability were: ^{131}I -MIBG ($n = 53$); ^{131}I -MIBG + Bu/Mel ($n = 35$)

to Bu/Mel. Of the 53 evaluable patients who received ^{131}I -MIBG, 10 patients did not proceed to Bu/Mel due to PD and were therefore not evaluable for the feasibility of ^{131}I -MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel because patients with PD were ineligible for Bu/Mel. Eight patients from Iteration 2 evaluable for feasibility did not proceed to ^{131}I -MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel due to physician preference ($n = 5$) or patient preference ($n = 3$) but were included in the feasibility calculation in addition to the 35 patients from Iteration 2 who received ^{131}I -MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel, allowing for 45 patients evaluable for the feasibility of ^{131}I -MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel (2 from Iteration 1 and 43 from Iteration 2). In addition, 35 patients (all from Iteration 2) were evaluable for tolerability of ^{131}I -MIBG plus myeloablative Bu/Mel. Median whole-body radiation doses for patients treated on Iteration 2 were 199 cGy (range, 106-428) (Table 2). The median time from ASCR after ^{131}I -MIBG to day 0 of ASCR after myeloablative Bu/Mel was 69 days (range, 63-125).

TABLE 2 Evaluable patients in Iteration 2 treated with MIBG with or without Bu/Mel

^{131}I -MIBG dose level	Received ^{131}I -MIBG (n)	Whole-body radiation dose ^a (cGy) Median (range)	Curie score at diagnosis ^b Median (range)	Curie score post-MIBG ^c induction Median (range)	patients with Curie score < 3 post-MIBG ^c Induction (n, %)	MIBG + Bu/Mel (n)
12 mCi/kg	7	183 (113-213)	23 (1-28)	0 (0-3)	4 (80.0%)	6
15 mCi/kg	26 ^d	216 (109-428)	19 (1-28)	1 (0-24)	14 (58.3%)	17
18 mCi/kg	20	197.5 (106-362)	22 (4-28)	2 (0-11)	11 (61.1%)	12
Total	53	199 (106-428)	20 (1-28)	1 (0-24)	29 (61.7%)	35

^aSeven, 24, and 18 patients evaluated, respectively, for the whole-body radiation dose in the 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg cohort.

^bSeven, 25, and 20 patients evaluated, respectively, for the Curie score at diagnosis in the 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg cohort.

^cFive, 24, and 18 patients evaluated, respectively, for the Curie score post-MIBG in the 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg cohort.

^dExcludes three patients who received ^{131}I -MIBG > 110% of the dose assigned.

TABLE 3 Patients with SOS in Iteration 2

SOS case	SOS severity	¹³¹ I-MIBG dose (mCi/kg)	Whole-body radiation (cGy)	Busulfan AUC (μ M/L/min) ^a	Busulfan dose adjusted ^b	MIBG to Bu/Mel (days) ^c
1	Severe	12	213	960	NC	65
2	Moderate	12	113	1002	D	68
3	Severe	15	253	1137	NC	69
4	Moderate	15	159	859	I	70
5	Moderate	15	160	1153	D	70
6	Moderate	15	262	1085	NC	69
7	Mild	15	256	756	I	70
8	Mild	15	347	910	NC	70
9	Severe	18	161	1134	NC	64
10	Moderate	18	199	1021	NC	69
11	Moderate	18	188	807	I	66

^aAll blood levels were after the first dose except cases 8 and 11, which were performed after a first and third dose and a test dose, respectively. Pharmacokinetics were performed as per institutional guidelines, to achieve an AUC for busulfan of 900 to 1500 μ M/liter/minute.

^bAbbreviations: D, decrease; I, increase; NC, no change; N/A, not available.

^cCalculated as days from ASCR post ¹³¹I-MIBG to days ASCR post myeloablative Bu/Mel.

4.2 | Feasibility

Fifty-nine of 68 patients (86.8%) evaluable for the feasibility of ¹³¹I-MIBG endpoint received ¹³¹I-MIBG (three in Iteration 1; 56 in Iteration 2), while nine additional patients met criteria to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG but were removed from protocol therapy due to physician/parent preference (Figure 2). These nine patients were divided between MIBG capable centers and non-MIBG capable centers. Thirty-seven of 45 patients (82.2%) evaluable for the ¹³¹I-MIBG plus Bu/Mel feasibility analysis received this combination (2 in Iteration 1; 35 in Iteration 2). The ¹³¹I-MIBG and ¹³¹I-MIBG plus Bu/Mel feasibility rates at 15 mCi/kg, the dose selected for further study, were 96.7% [95% Wilson confidence interval (CI): (83.3%-99.4%)] and 81.0% [95% CI: (60.0%-92.3%)], all meeting criteria for feasibility (>80%).

The family/caregiver MIBG questionnaire was completed by 20 eligible families out of 29 (69.0%) who traveled to another institution to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy (Supporting Information Table S1). The median number of days at the MIBG-treating institution was 7 (range, 3-18). The median percentage of average total income encompassed by the total of travel + housing + food + lost wages was 6.4% (range, 2.4%-16.4%) (Supporting Information Table S2). No patient who was assigned an MIBG dose was unable to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG due to insurance refusal, including the 25.5% (25/98) of patients with public insurance.

4.3 | Tolerability

Of the 53 evaluable patients in Iteration 2 (when evaluated before administration of Bu/Mel), there were no patients with grade \geq 4

non-hematologic toxicity or SOS, and only three patients with grade 3 toxicities, all of which completely resolved (Supporting Information Table S3).

Thirty-five patients from Iteration 2 received Bu/Mel consolidation (Table 2). There were no toxic deaths at any dose. One patient developed grade 4 hypoxia with pleural effusion due to SOS attributed to Bu/Mel conditioning. One patient developed pulmonary hypertension and cardiac arrest two months after Bu/Mel; this patient was successfully resuscitated and the treating physician did not attribute the event to Bu/Mel. Other toxicities following the combination of ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel in Iteration 2 were as expected: 14.3% developed grade 3-4 febrile neutropenia while 34.3% developed mucositis (Supporting Information Table S3). The regimen in Iteration 2 was deemed tolerable, as there were no toxic deaths, fewer than four patients at any dose level had grade 4 non-hematological toxicity, and engraftment was rapid post-Bu/Mel, with all patients reaching ANC > 500 before day 28 after transplant.

Eleven of the 35 patients (31.4%) receiving Bu/Mel in Iteration 2 developed SOS of any severity (Table 3). Overall rates of moderate to severe SOS at the 12, 15, and 18 mCi/kg doses were 33.3%, 23.5%, and 25.0%, respectively. Patients with moderate to severe SOS received defibrotide for a median of 22 days (range, 5-39). The Wilcoxon rank-sum test showed no differences in whole-body radiation dose ($P = 0.7554$), busulfan area under the curve (AUC) ($P = 0.1827$), and median number of days (70 vs. 68) between administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel among patients who did versus did not develop SOS ($P = 0.4970$). By Fisher exact test, there was no relationship between ¹³¹I-MIBG dose per kg administered ($P = 0.8899$) and frequency of busulfan dose changes in those who developed SOS compared with those who did not ($P = 0.3928$).

TABLE 4 Response to ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy and response to Bu/Mel consolidation during Iteration 2

Response post-BuMel	Response post-MIBG							Total
	CR	VGPR	PR	NR	MR	PD	NE	
CR	13	0	3	0	0	0	0	16
VGPR	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	7
PR	0	0	7	0	1	0	0	8
NR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PD	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
NE	0	1	5	2	1	10	3	22 ^a
Total	13	7	18	2	3	10	3	56^b

Abbreviations: Bu/Mel, busulfan/melphalan; CR, complete response; MR, mixed response; NE, no evaluation; NR, no response; PD, progressive disease, evaluated according to International Neuroblastoma Response Criteria²⁵; PR, partial response; VGPR, very good partial response.

^aOf the 22 patients not evaluated, one patient was not evaluated post-BuMel, while the other 21 patients did not receive BuMel.

^bThree patients of the 56 were not evaluated, leaving 53 evaluated patients.

4.4 | Response and EFS

Thirty-eight of 53 Iteration 2 patients (71.7%) evaluated for response after induction chemotherapy plus ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy achieved an objective response (CR/VGPR/PR) (Table 4). Thirty-one of 34 (91.2%) were in CR/VGPR/PR at the end-consolidation. All of the patients who had a CR at end-induction also had a CR at end of consolidation; in addition, three patients who had a PR at end of induction had a CR at end of consolidation. Of the 38 patients who had an objective response at end of induction, only two developed PD at end of consolidation (Table 4; Supporting Information Table S4). The median Curie score at the end of induction with MIBG was 1 (0.24) (Table 2); a total of 29/53 (61.7%) patients had a Curie score of <3 at the end of induction plus MIBG (Table 2). Only one of the 10 patients who had PD before myeloablative BuMel had complete resolution of MIBG avidity after ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy (Supporting Information Table S5). One-year EFS for all eligible patients was 74.2% ± 4.4% (n = 98) (Supporting Information Figure S1). The one-year EFS for those who received ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy on Iteration 2 was 71.4% ± 6.0% (n = 56). The one-year and three-year EFS for those on Iteration 2 who received ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel were 91.4% ± 4.7% (n = 35) and 60.0% ± 8.3%, respectively (Supporting Information Figure S1).

5 | DISCUSSION

The addition of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy during induction for patients with MIBG-avid high-risk neuroblastoma may decrease disease burden prior to myeloablative therapy and ultimately improve EFS.^{31,32} Our trial enrolled 99 high-risk neuroblastoma patients from 23 institutions and myeloablative therapy after MIBG was administered to 37 high-risk patients treated from diagnosis, thereby demonstrating the feasi-

bility and tolerability of administering ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy during induction followed by myeloablative therapy with Bu/Mel in a cooperative group setting.

Feasibility benchmarks were met for administration of ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy, with 86.8% of patients assigned an MIBG dose able to receive this therapy, and 82.2% of eligible patients able to receive ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy and planned myeloablative Bu/Mel consolidation therapy. Even including the 18 patients on Iteration 2 who received MIBG but either developed PD or chose not to proceed to Bu/Mel, the feasibility rate would be 37/63 (58.7%), comparable to SIOPEN and COG trials where only about 50% of patients entered were randomized prior to myeloablative therapy at the end of induction.^{1,4} This study showed that it was feasible to transfer patients to another institution for ¹³¹I-MIBG therapy within the desired timeframe and transfer them back to their primary institution for stem cell support, with subsequent administration of myeloablative Bu/Mel conditioning and ASCR. There are now > 20 institutions capable of administering high-dose ¹³¹I-MIBG to children in North America, further improving access to this therapy for newly diagnosed patients.

Concern about the burden of cancer treatment on families is mounting.^{33–35} Despite required travel for MIBG therapy for a portion of patients on this trial, the estimated economic burden to families was below the *a priori* study threshold of 10% of median annual salary, and extended time away from home was not required. Although charitable support for families was not taken into account during assessment of economic impact, no patients in this trial were denied treatment due to lack of insurance coverage.

This regimen was also shown to be tolerable in the frontline setting. The cohort now described comprises the largest group of patients with high-risk neuroblastoma treated from diagnosis to undergo ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by Bu/Mel. Although stopping rules outlined in the protocol were not met, concern regarding the development of severe SOS in the first two patients on this study led to a major amendment to remove the concomitant use of vincristine and irinotecan with ¹³¹I-MIBG, and to extend the time between ¹³¹I-MIBG and Bu/Mel. Following this change, 11 cases of SOS occurred; however, only three cases were severe. In previous studies in patients with relapsed neuroblastoma in whom ¹³¹I-MIBG was delivered two weeks prior to a myeloablative CEM conditioning regimen and ASCR, a 12% incidence of SOS was observed.^{19,36} In two small studies of patients with relapsed/refractory neuroblastoma who received ¹³¹I-MIBG followed by myeloablative Bu/Mel ASCR, there were 2/17 with severe SOS.^{21,22} In an international SIOPEN trial of Bu/Mel versus CEM for high-risk neuroblastoma, 60 of 267 (22%) patients who received Bu/Mel developed SOS with Bearman toxicity grades 1-3 compared with 21 of 239 (9%) receiving CEM.⁴ In a single-institution retrospective study of CEM versus Bu/Mel in high-risk neuroblastoma, SOS was observed in 7/44 CEM (15.9%) and 5/21 Bu/Mel (24%) patients.³⁷ The overall SOS rate of 31.4% in our study and the 8.6% rate of severe SOS were both apparently higher than in the SIOPEN study of Bu/Mel alone (4%), suggesting that the proximity of MIBG to Bu/Mel may increase the risk of SOS. No correlation between development of SOS and busulfan AUC, whole-body radiation dose or MIBG dose administered was found in our study.

Although our data show that administration of ^{131}I -MIBG followed by Bu/Mel is tolerable, close monitoring for SOS is required.

The response rate at the end of induction in our study was similar to rates associated with regimens not including ^{131}I -MIBG.^{1,3} Importantly, 18.9% of patients developed PD during the interval between MIBG and Bu/Mel, which suggests this may not be the optimal timing of ^{131}I -MIBG therapy due to the required delay in starting consolidation therapy. Because administration of ^{131}I -MIBG therapy early in induction may improve extent of tumor resection³² and end-induction response, earlier administration of this component of therapy may be advantageous. Finally, results of a randomized COG trial indicate that tandem CEM-based transplant improves EFS compared with single CEM transplant.¹ The potential for SOS with ^{131}I -MIBG in close proximity to Bu/Mel led to selection of ^{131}I -MIBG administered earlier during induction in an ongoing randomized phase 3 COG trial that includes tandem transplant (NCT03126916). In the phase 3 COG trial, the dose of 15 mCi/kg was selected to be conservative given the risk of SOS, because there was no appreciable difference in response and toxicity from the 18 mCi/kg dose.

6 | CONCLUSION

This pilot trial demonstrated the feasibility and tolerability of administering ^{131}I -MIBG followed by myeloablative therapy with Bu/Mel to newly diagnosed children with high-risk neuroblastoma in a cooperative group setting, thus laying the groundwork for a large randomized trial evaluating the impact of adding ^{131}I -MIBG during induction therapy.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no known competing financial interests/personal relationships to declare. All authors contributed to this paper substantively.

CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY GROUP DATA SHARING POLICY

The Children's Oncology Group Data Sharing policy describes the release and use of COG individual subject data for use in research projects in accordance with National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN) Program and NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) Guidelines. Only data expressly released from the oversight of the relevant COG Data and Safety Monitoring Committee (DSMC) are available to be shared. Data sharing will ordinarily be considered only after the primary study manuscript is accepted for publication. For phase 3 studies, individual-level deidentified data sets that would be sufficient to reproduce results provided in a publication containing the primary study analysis can be requested from the NCTN/NCORP Data Archive at <https://nctn-data-archive.nci.nih.gov/>. Data are available to researchers who wish to analyze the data in secondary studies to enhance the public health benefit of the original work and agree to the terms and conditions of use. For non-phase 3 studies, data are available following the primary publication. An individual-level de-

identified data set containing the variables analyzed in the primary results paper can be expected to be available upon request. Requests for access to COG protocol research data should be sent to: datarequest@childrensoncologygroup.org. Data are available to researchers whose proposed analysis is found by COG to be feasible and of scientific merit and who agree to the terms and conditions of use.

For all requests, no other study documents, including the protocol, will be made available and no end date exists for requests. In addition to above, release of data collected in a clinical trial conducted under a binding collaborative agreement between COG or the NCI Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program (CTEP) and a pharmaceutical/biotechnology company must comply with the data sharing terms of the binding collaborative/contractual agreement and must receive the proper approvals.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

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