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# Acquired SAA: place of immunosuppression and TPO recetor agonists in 2022

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**Régis Peffault de Latour, MD, PhD**

French reference center for aplastic anemia & PNH

French network for rare immunological & hematological disorders (MaRIH)

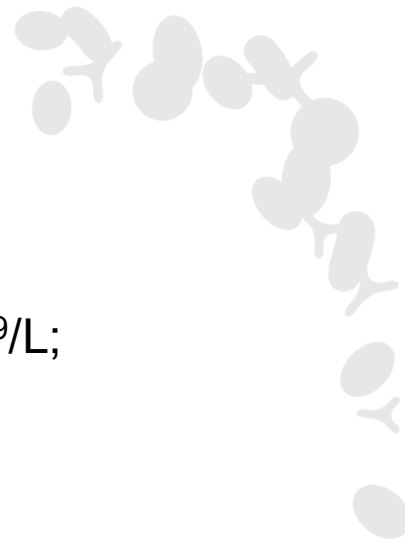
Severe aplastic anemia working party of EBMT (SAAWP EBMT)

Hôpital Saint-Louis, Paris, France

# Disclosures

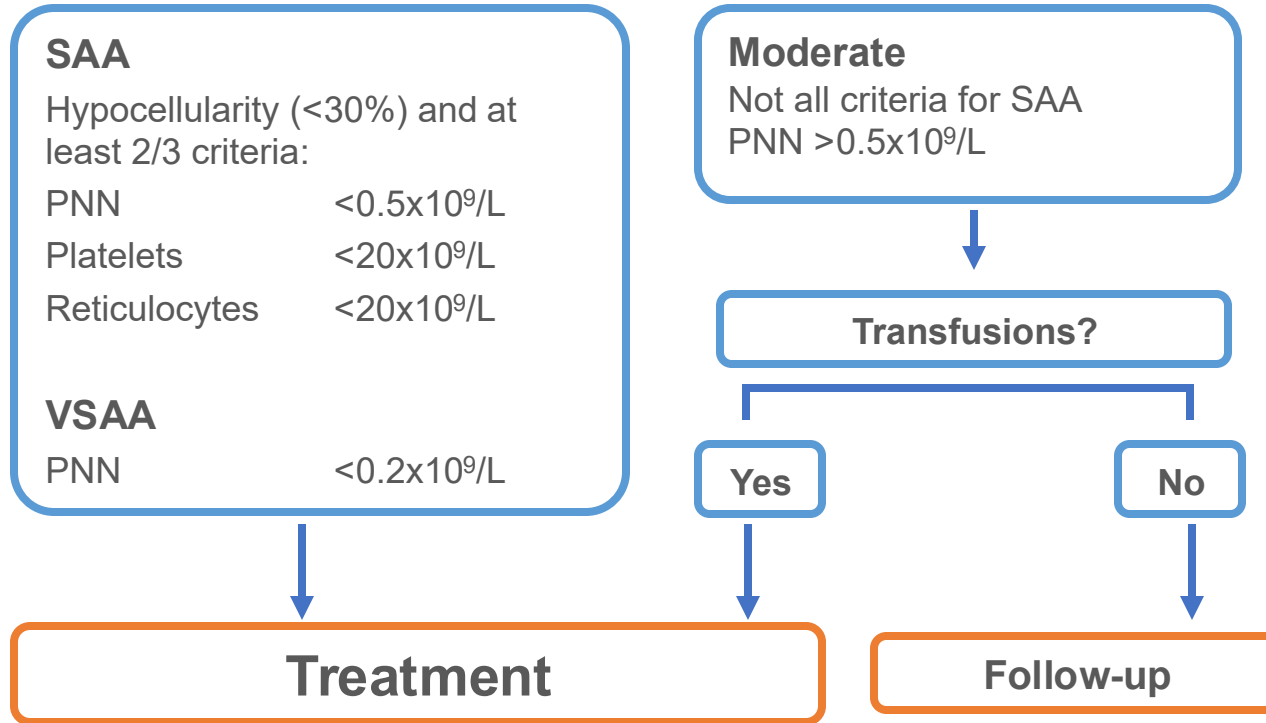
- **Expert consultant / speaker:** Alexion, Amgen, Apellis, Jazz, Novartis, Pfizer, Roche & Samsung
- **Research grant:** Alexion, Novartis & Pfizer

# Patient case



- Male, 17 years old
- Aplastic anemia:
  - Hb: 4.8 g/dL; Neutrophils:  $0.75 \times 10^9/L$ ; Platelets:  $11 \times 10^9/L$ ; Reticulocytes:  $35 \times 10^9/L$ )
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  - **Hypocellular bone marrow (<5%) with no dysplasia**
- Acquired:
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  - No family history
  - Normal physical exam
  - PNH positive (3%) – FA & Telomeropathy negative

# When should we start a treatment?



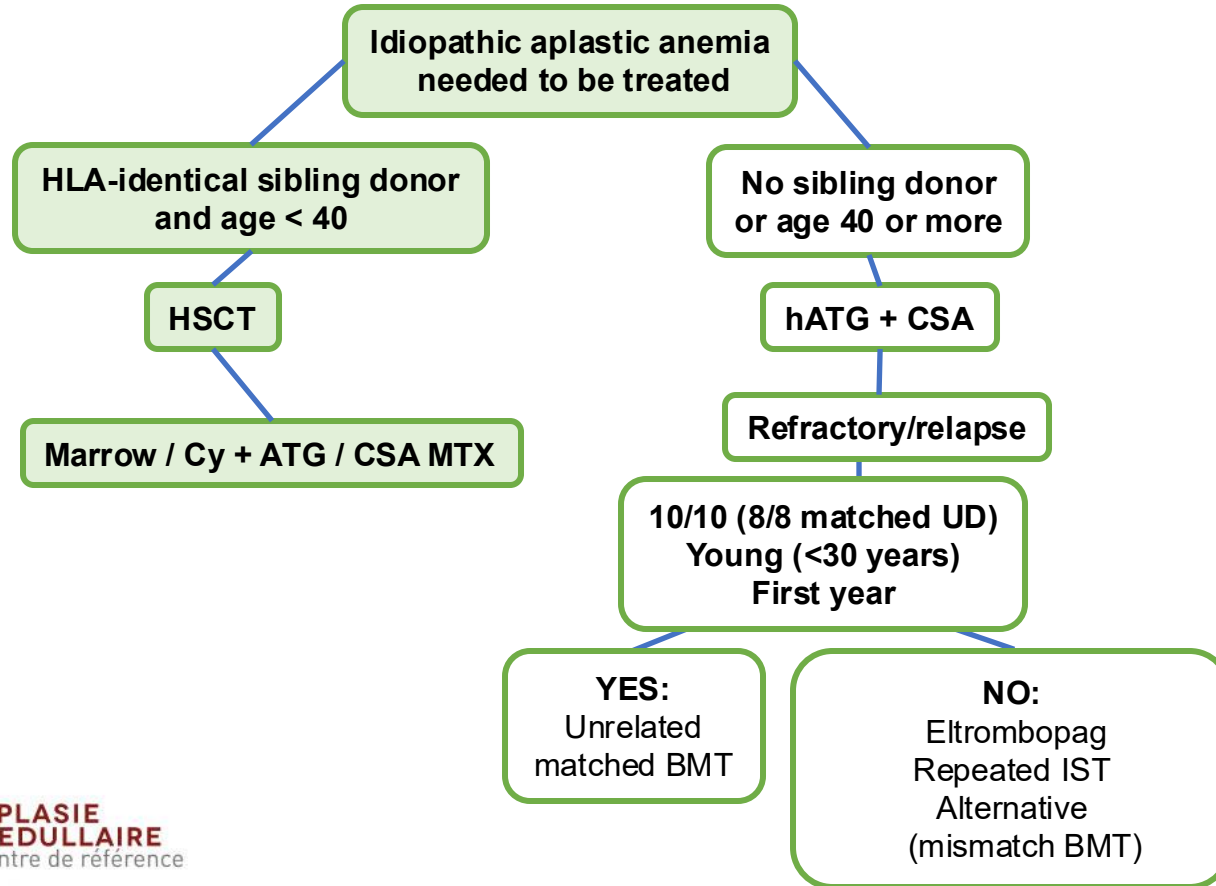
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**1 sibling available**

# Treatment (guidelines)

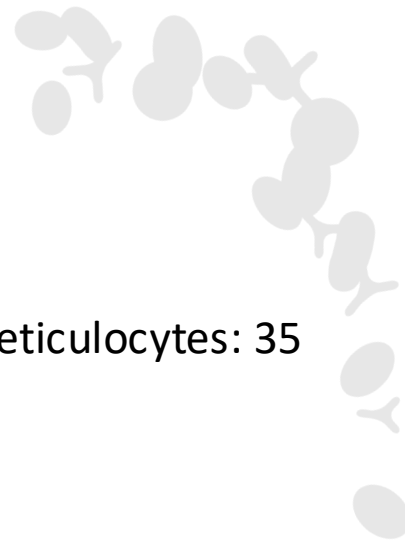
Cf Andrea  
Bacigalupo



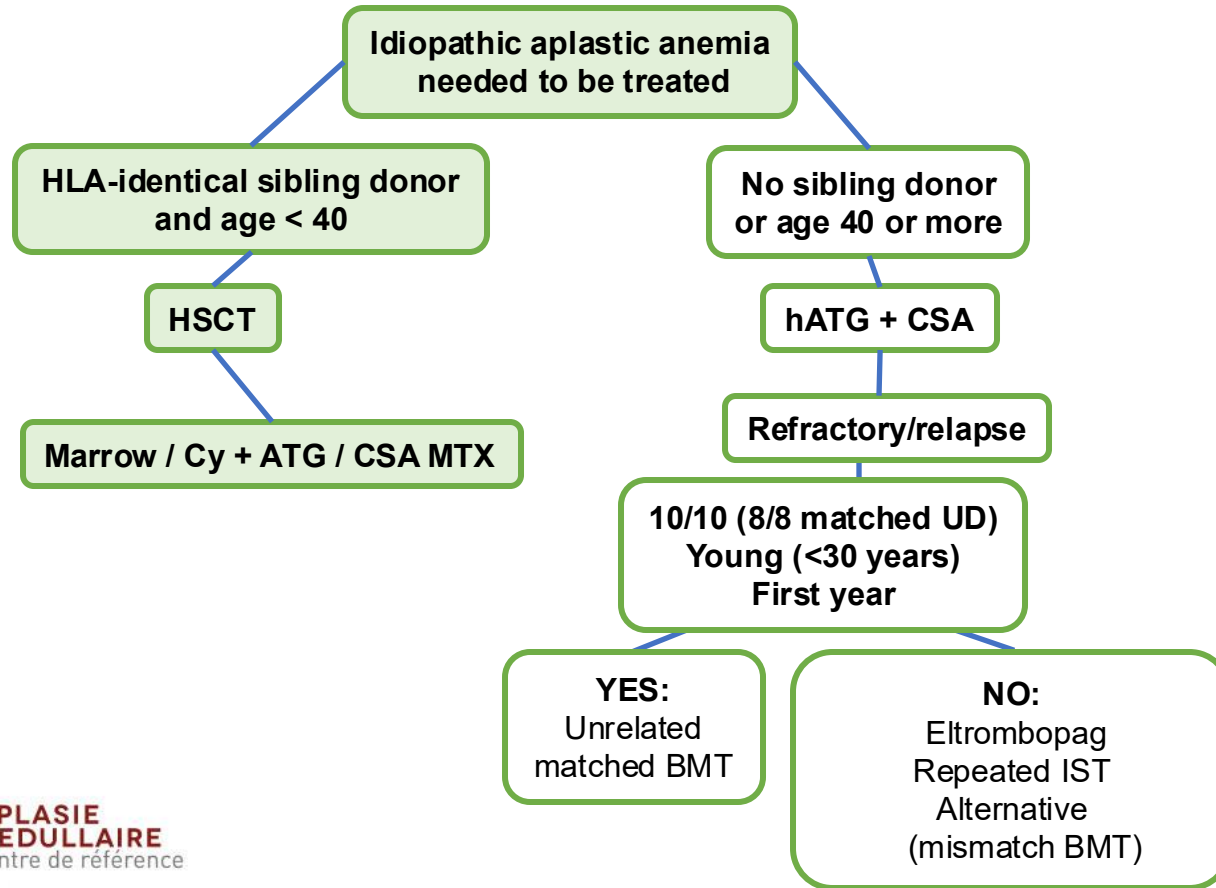
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**No sibling but  
good probability  
for a 10/10  
unrelated donor**

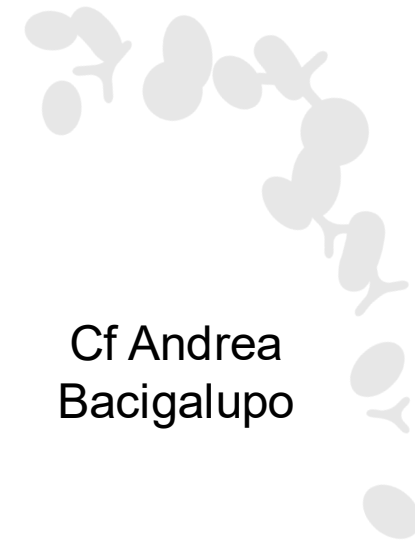


# Treatment (guidelines)

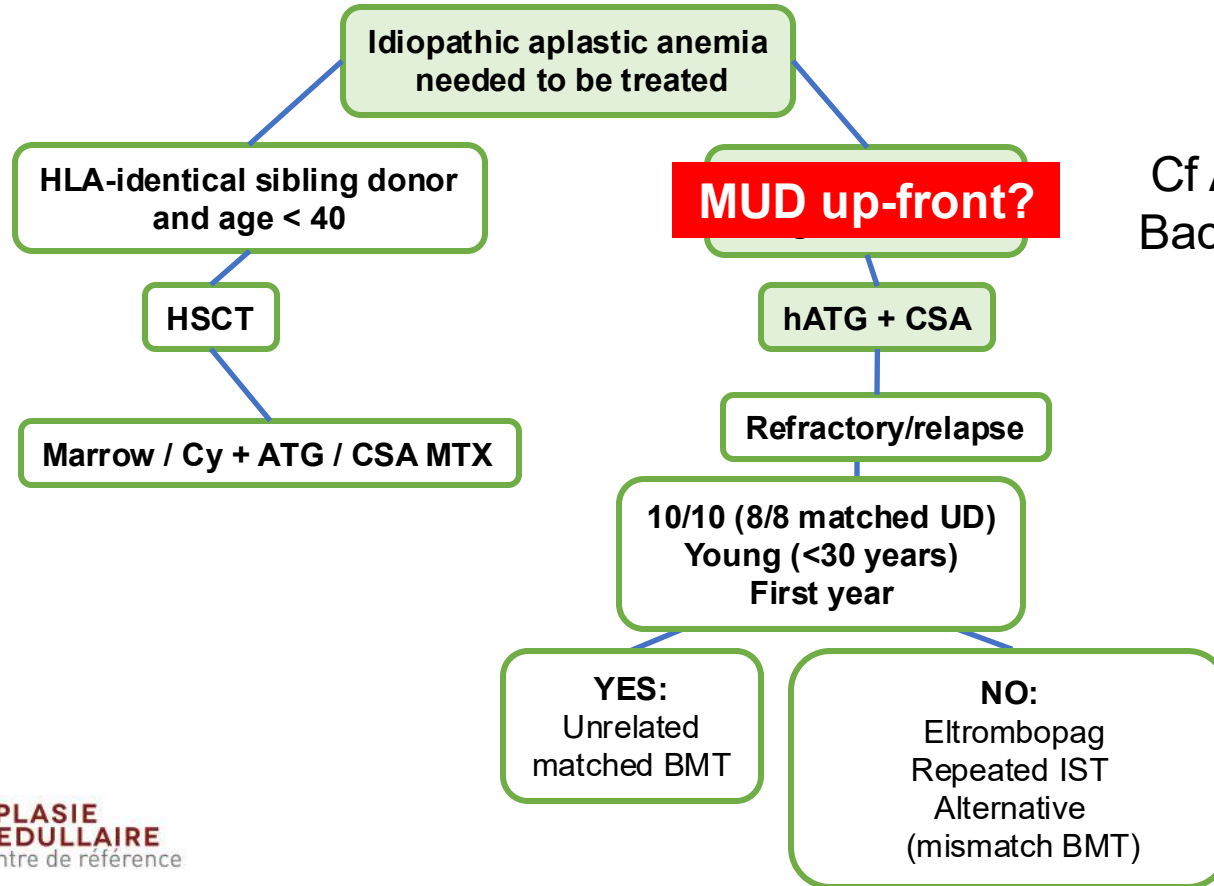




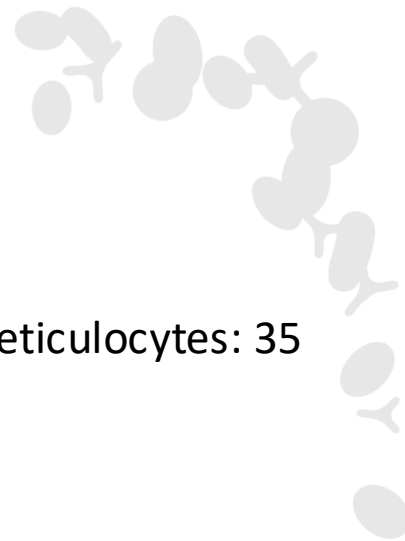
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Cf Andrea Bacigalupo



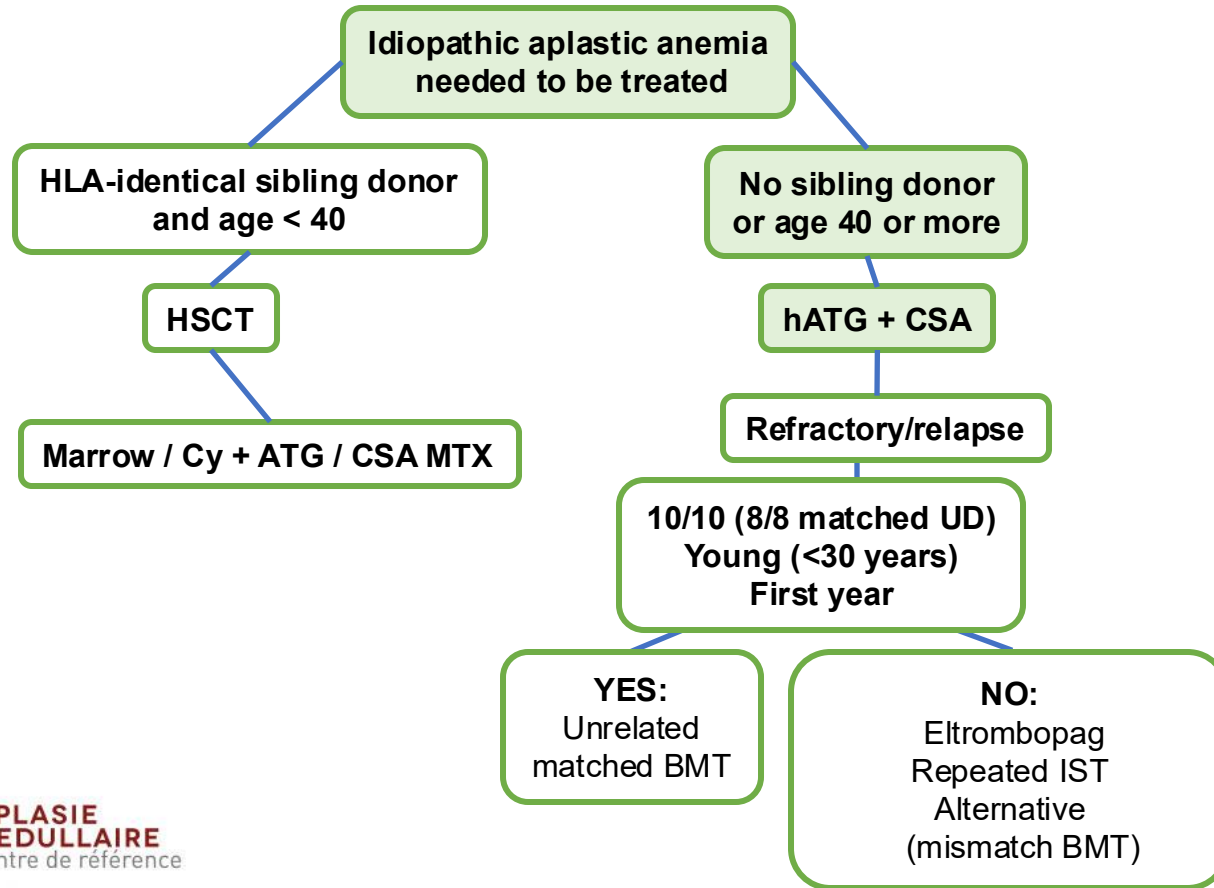
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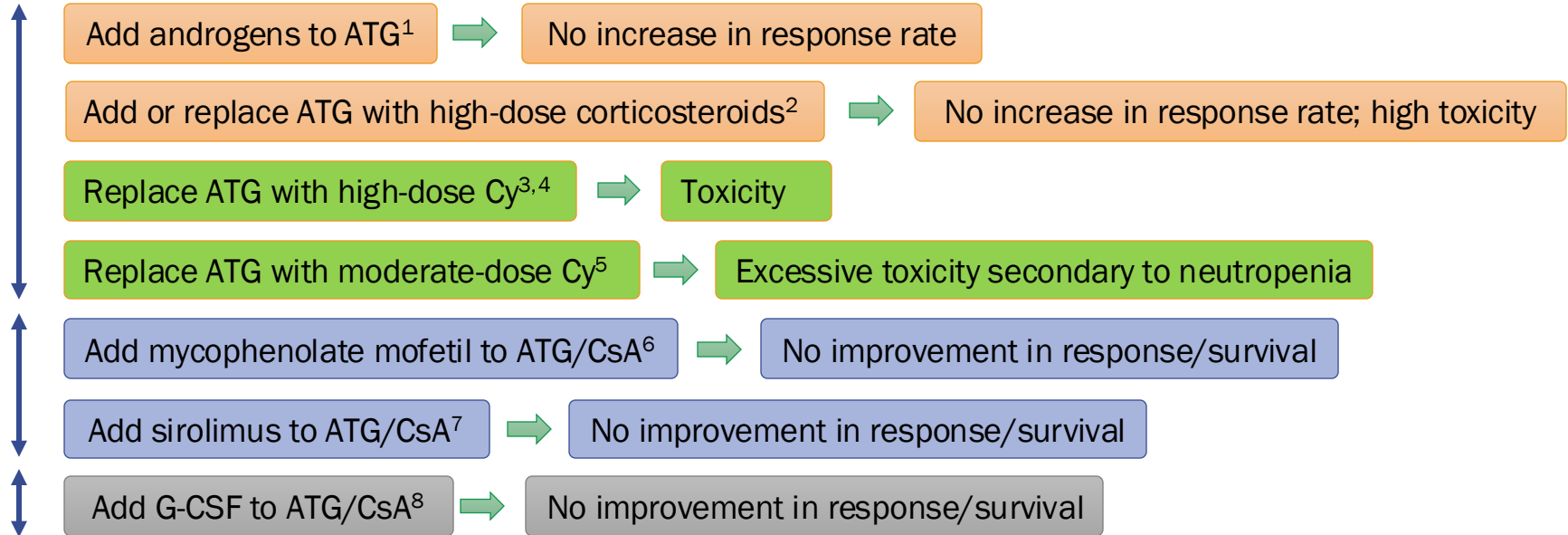
**No sibling  
No 10/10  
Only 9/10 CB or  
haplo donor**

# Treatment (guidelines)



# How to improve immunosuppression?

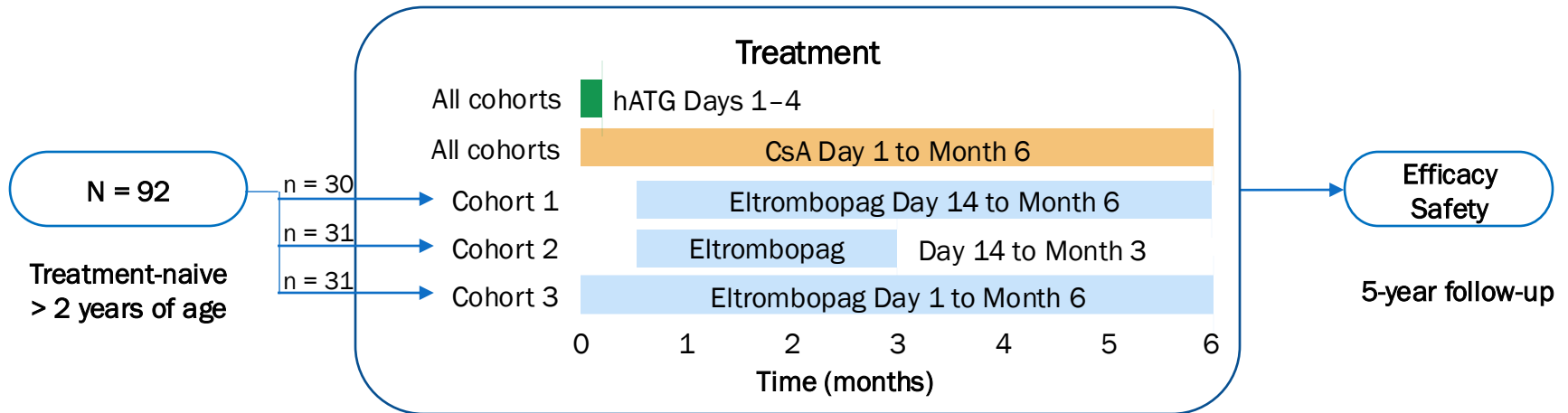
- Standard IST for patients with SAA/vSAA who are not eligible for HSCT is **horse antithymocyte globulin (hATG) plus ciclosporin (CsA)** since 30 years



1. Champlin RE, et al. Blood. 1985;66:184-8. 2. Marmont AM, et al. Prog Clin Biol Res. 1984;148:271-87. 3. Tisdale JF, et al. Lancet. 2000;356:1554-9. 4. Tisdale JF, et al. Blood. 2002;100:4668-70. 5. Scheinberg P, et al. Blood. 2014;124:2820-3. 6. Scheinberg P, et al. Br J Haematol. 2006;133:606-11. 7. Scheinberg P, et al. Haematologica. 2009;94:348-54. 8. Locasciulli A, et al. Haematologica. 2004;89:1054-61.

# Eltrombopag first line?

- A phase 2, open-label, interventional, single-arm, sequential cohort study of **eltrombopag in combination with immunosuppression in the first-line** treatment of patients with SAA



# Eltrombopag first line?

## At 6 months

### CR

- Platelet count  $100 \times 10^9/L$
- Neutrophil count  $\geq 1 \times 10^9/L$
- Hemoglobin level 10 g/dL

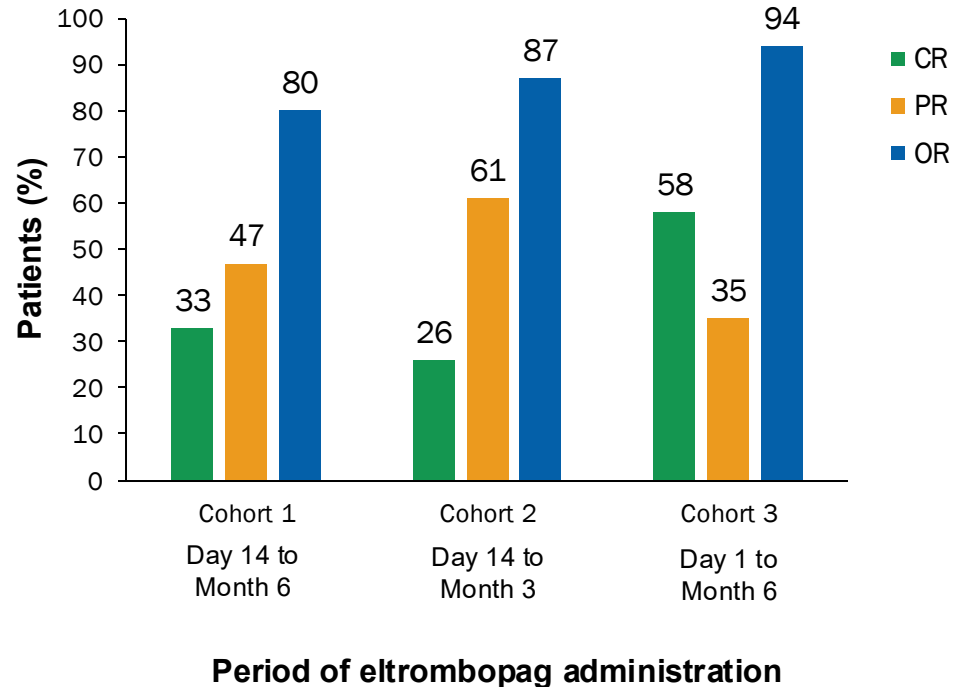
### PR

- Blood counts not meeting criteria for SAA or CR

## Historical controls IST only

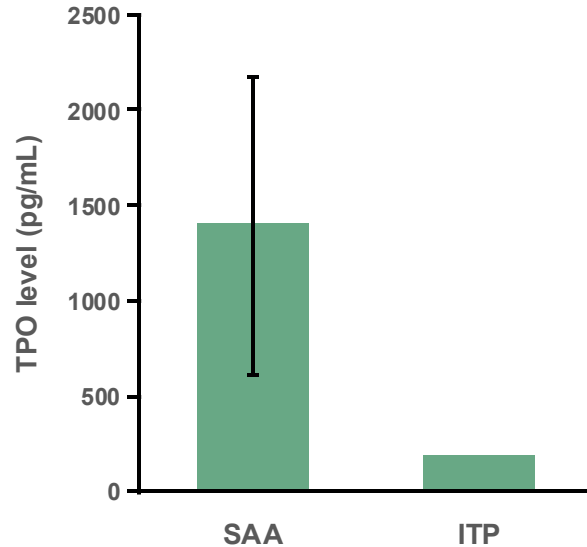
CR 17%

OR 68%

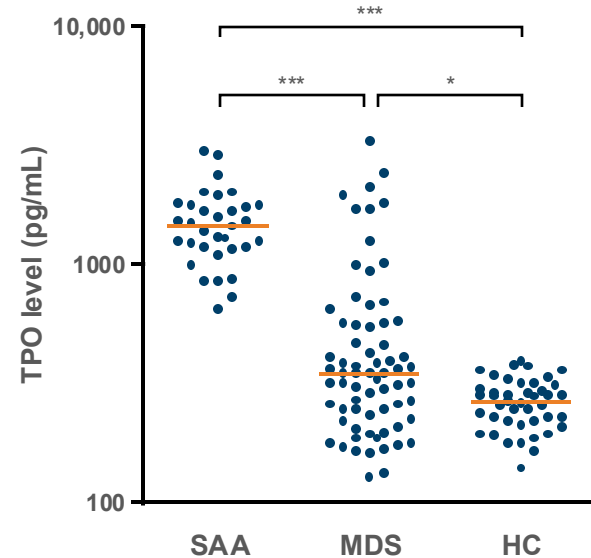


# Eltrombopag a surprise? Yes!

Serum TPO levels are markedly elevated in patients with aplastic anemia



Emmons RV *et al. Blood* 1996;87:4068–4071



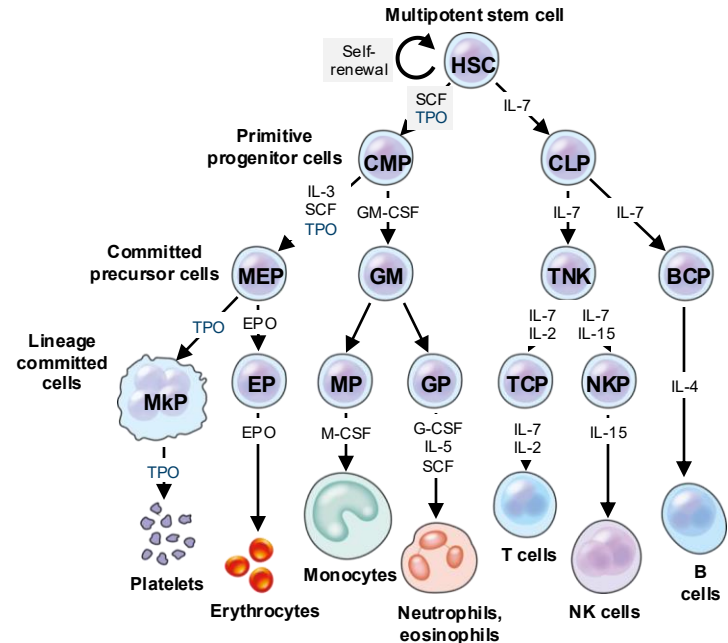
\*\*\* $P < 0.001$ ; \* $P < 0.05$

Feng X *et al. Haematologica* 2011;96:602–606

# Eltrombopag a surprise? Possibly not...

- TPO, acting through TPO-R, is essential for normal thrombopoiesis<sup>1</sup>
- TPO-R (c-mpl) is expressed on HSCs<sup>2</sup>
- C-mpl and TPO knock out mice have a reduced number of HSCs
- TPO is able to expand HSCs in vitro<sup>2,3</sup>
- Patients with congenital amegacaryocytosis may eventually evolved to bone marrow failure

## TPO: Role in Hematopoiesis



BCP, B-cell progenitor; CLP, common lymphoid progenitor; CMP, common myeloid progenitor; EP, erythroid progenitor; EPO, erythropoietin; GM, granulocyte-macrophage progenitor; GM-CSF, granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor; GP, granulocyte progenitor; HSC, hematopoietic stem cell; IL, interleukin; MEP, megakaryocyte erythroid progenitor; MkP, megakaryocyte progenitor; MP, monocyte progenitor; NK, natural killer; NKP, natural killer cell progenitor; RBC, red blood cell; SCF, stem cell factor; TCP, T cell progenitor; TNK, T cell natural killer cell progenitor; TPO, thrombopoietin; TPO-R, TPO receptor; WBC, white blood cell. 1. Kaushansky K. *Stem Cells* 1997;15:97-103; 2. Jacobsen SE *et al. Stem Cells* 1996(Suppl 1);173-180; 3. Robb L *et al. Cytokine* 2007;26:6715-6723



# Eltrombopag mechanism of action (...)

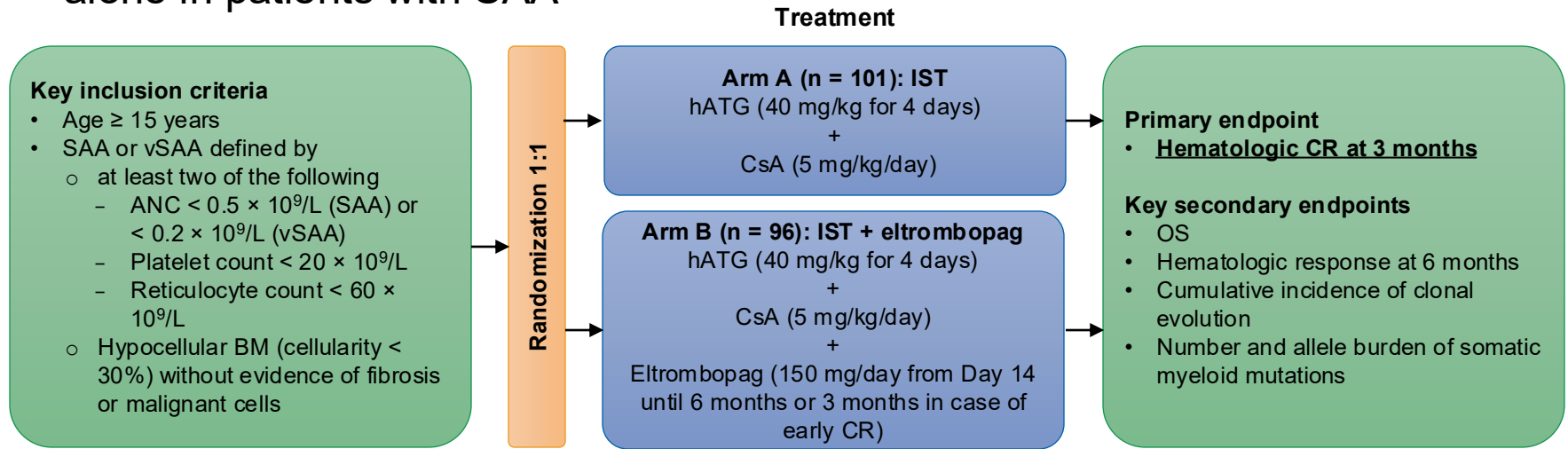
- The mechanism of action of EPAG in AA **still requires further investigation**.
- Several data have shown that EPAG stimulates hematopoiesis despite high levels of endogenous thrombopoietin (Olmes et al NEJM 2012; Desmond et al Blood 2014). However, it is not clear whether this action is exerted at the **level of hematopoietic stem cells or on more mature progenitor cells** (i.e., increasing the ratio of progenitor/stem cells).
- In addition to its direct stimulatory action on hematopoiesis, EPAG might also contribute to the immunosuppressive effect of ATG and CsA. Indeed, a recent study has shown that EPAG, through its **binding to the transmembrane domain of the thrombopoietin receptor**, prevents the inhibitory effect of IFN- $\gamma$  by interrupting the interaction between endogenous thrombopoietin and its cognate receptor (i.e., serving as a decoy receptor) (Alvarado LJ et al Blood 2019).
- **Iron chelator?** (Vlachodimitropoulou E et al Blood 2017)

## **Results of the EBMT SAAWP Phase III Prospective Randomized Multicenter RACE Study of Horse ATG and Ciclosporin with or without Eltrombopag in naïve SAA patients**

**Régis Peffault de Latour, MD, PhD<sup>1,2\*</sup>**, Judith C.W. Marsh, MD, FRCPATH<sup>3</sup>, Simona Iacobelli<sup>2,4\*</sup>, Sofie R. Terwel, MSc<sup>2\*</sup>, Anita Hill, MD PhD<sup>5\*</sup>, Constantijn J.M. Halkes, MD<sup>6</sup>, Christian Recher, MD, PhD<sup>7</sup>, Fiorenza Barraco, MD<sup>8\*</sup>, Edouard Forcade, MD<sup>9</sup>, Juan Carlos Vallejo Llamas<sup>10\*</sup>, Beatrice Drexler, MD<sup>11\*</sup>, Jean-Baptiste Mear, MD<sup>12\*</sup>, Maria Teresa van Lint<sup>13\*</sup>, Reinier A.P. Raymakers, MD PhD<sup>14\*</sup>, Marco R De Groot, MD, PhD<sup>15</sup>, Etienne Daguindau<sup>16\*</sup>, Erfan Nur, MD, PhD<sup>17</sup>, Wilma Barcellini<sup>18\*</sup>, Nigel H. Russell, MD<sup>19</sup>, Louis Terriou, MD<sup>20\*</sup>, Anna Paola Iori, MD<sup>21\*</sup>, Isabel Sánchez- Ortega<sup>22\*</sup>, Blanca Xicoy, MD, MSc<sup>23\*</sup>, Isidro Jarque<sup>24\*</sup>, James Cavenagh<sup>25</sup>, Flore Sicre de Fontbrune<sup>1\*</sup>, Austin Kulasekararaj, MD, MBBS, MRCP, FRCPATH<sup>3</sup>, Serena Marotta<sup>26\*</sup>, Talha Munir, MD<sup>5\*</sup>, Jennifer M.L. Tjon, MD, PhD<sup>6\*</sup>, Suzanne Tavitian, MD<sup>7\*</sup>, Aline Praire<sup>8\*</sup>, Laurence Clement<sup>9\*</sup>, Florence Rabian, MD<sup>27\*</sup>, Alexander E Smith, PhD<sup>3\*</sup>, Riley Cook, MD<sup>3\*</sup>, Luana Marano<sup>26\*</sup>, Morag Griffin, MD<sup>5\*</sup>, Elena Palmisani<sup>28\*</sup>, Petra Muus, MD, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Fabiana Cacace<sup>26\*</sup>, Jakob R. Passweg, MD, MS<sup>11</sup>, Gerard Socie, MD, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Ghulam J. Mufti, MBBS, FRCP, FRCPATH, DM<sup>3\*</sup>, Carlo Dufour<sup>2,28</sup> and Antonio M. Risitano, MD, PhD<sup>2,26</sup>

# Race design

- The **RACE trial** is an investigator-driven, open-label, phase 3, randomized trial comparing the combination of hATG, CsA, and eltrombopag with IST alone in patients with SAA



**Central laboratory** King's college, London

**Stratification** based on **disease severity, age and center**

# RACE definitions & study design

- **RACE criteria for response**

- **CR:** Hb >100 g/L, neutrophils >1.0x10<sup>9</sup>/L and platelets >100x10<sup>9</sup>/L
- **PR:** no longer meets SAA criteria, Transfusion independence, Hb >8gr/dL, neutrophils >0.5x10<sup>9</sup>/L and platelets >20x10<sup>9</sup>/L
- **NR:** not meeting criteria for response

- **Clonal evolution**

- Acute leukemia, myelodysplastic syndrome and/or new karyotypic abnormality

- **Primary endpoint**

- To detect an increase in CR from 7% in arm A to 21% in arm B at 3m (at least 96 patients per arm)

# NIH study versus RACE

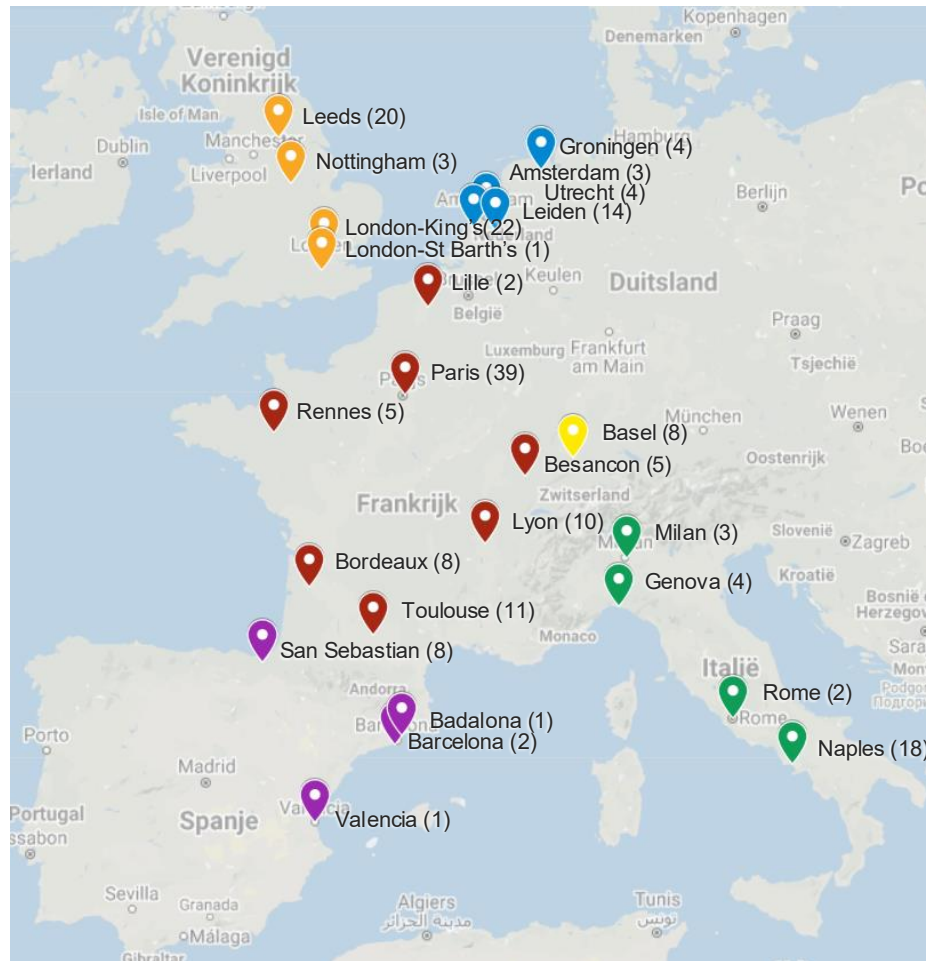
	NIH study <sup>1</sup>	RACE <sup>2</sup>
Study design	Non-randomized, historically controlled	Randomized, controlled
CsA treatment duration	6 months + low dose for up to 24 months	1 year + low dose for up to 24 months
Eltrombopag initiation	On Day 1 in Cohort 3 On Day 14 in Cohort 1 and 2	On Day 14
Eltrombopag treatment duration	6 months in Cohort 1 and 3 3 months in Cohort 2	6 months 3 months with early CR
Primary endpoint	CR and PR at 6 months	CR at 3 months
Criteria for response	PR: transfusion independency not needed	PR: transfusion independency required
Minimum age of inclusion, years	2	15
Median age of patients, years	32	53

1. Townsley DM, et al. N Engl J Med. 2017;376:1540-50.

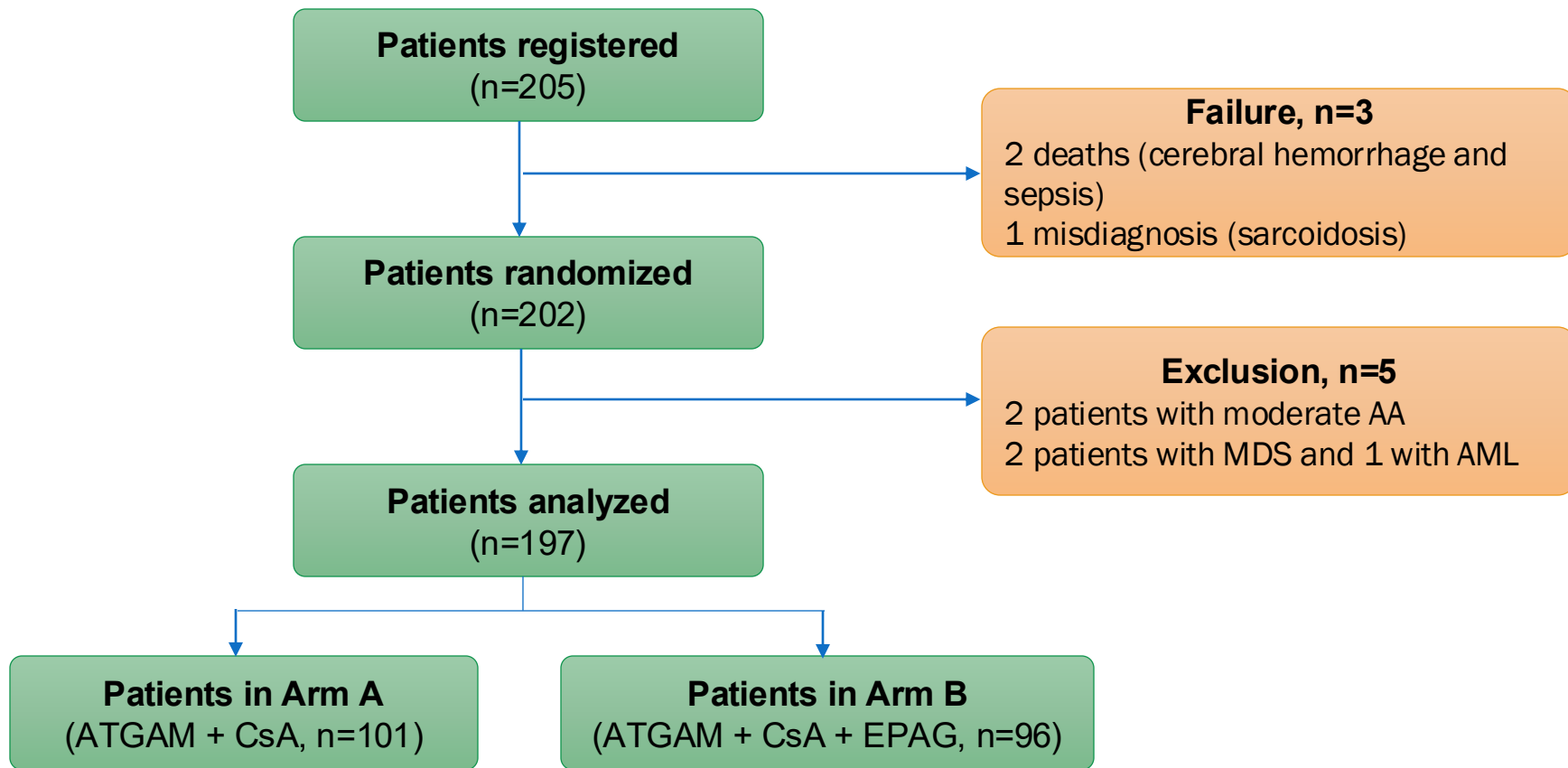
2. Peffault de Latour R, et al., unpublished data. Accepted for oral presentation at EBMT 2020; abstract GS2-2.

# RACE trial

- **Inclusion period:** July 2015 - April 2019
- **Patients:** 205 treatment naïve patients enrolled in 6 countries and 24 sites
- **Median Follow-up:** 24 months



# RACE flow chart



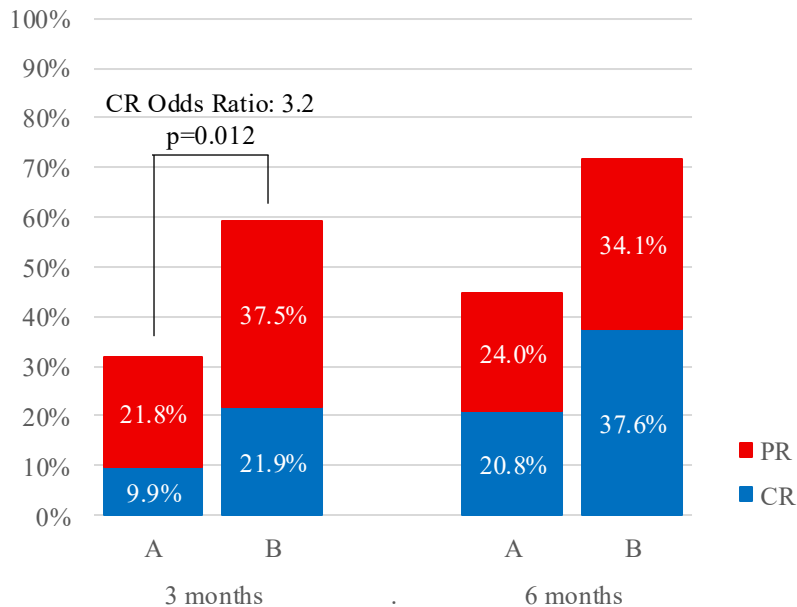
# Baseline characteristics

	Arm A	Arm B	Total
<b>No. of patients</b>	101 (51.3%)	96 (48.7%)	197 (100%)
<b>Age (median, min-max)</b>	52 (15-81)	55 (16-77)	53 (15-81)
<b>Age categories (n, %)</b>			
<18 y	7 (6.9%)	2 (2.1%)	9 (4.6%)
18-<40	29 (28.7%)	27 (28.1%)	56 (28.4%)
40-<65	43 (42.6%)	43 (44.8%)	86 (43.7%)
>65	22 (21.8)	24 (25.0%)	46 (23.4%)
<b>Sex (n, %)</b>			
Male	52 (51.5%)	56 (58.3%)	108 (54.8%)
Female	49 (48.5%)	40 (41.7%)	89 (45.2%)
<b>Severity of AA (n, %)</b>			
SAA	67 (66.3%)	62 (64.6%)	129 (65.5%)
vSAA	34 (33.7%)	34 (35.4%)	68 (34.5%)
<b>PNH granulocytes &gt;1.0% (n, %)</b>	44 (44.9%)	33 (35.5%)	77 (40.3%)



# Hematological response

- The **RACE study** was powered to detect an increase in CR from 7% in arm A to 21% in arm B at 3 months (primary endpoint).
- **CR at 3 months\*:**
  - Arm A: 9.9% & Arm B: 21.9%
  - Pooled Odds Ratio 3.2,  $p=0.012$
- **OR at 6 months (preliminary analysis n=181)\*:**
  - Arm A: 44.8% & Arm B: 71.8%
  - Pooled Odds Ratio: 3.7



*\*Prior transplantation, clonal evolution or death were considered as no response at 3 and 6m*

# Hematological response (NIH criteria)

**NIH criteria = PR: transfusion independency not needed**

		Response at 3 months			Response at 6 months		
		hATG + CsA (Arm A)	hATG + CsA + EPAG (Arm B)	OR (95%CI)* (p-value)	hATG + CsA (Arm A)	hATG + CsA + EPAG (Arm B)	OR (95%CI)* (p-value)
	CR	10 (9.9%)	21 (21.9%)	<b>3.2 (1.3-7.8)</b> (p=0.012)	20 (19.8%)	30 (31.6%)	<b>2.3 (1.1-4.7)</b> (p=0.019)
	PR	55 (54.5%)	51 (53.1%)		47 (46.5%)	44 (46.3%)	
	No response	33 (32.7%)	22 (22.9%)		34 (33.7%)	20 (21.1%)	
	Unclassified	3 (3.0%)	2 (2.1%)		0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	
	CR+PR (OR)	65 (66.3%)	72 (76.6%)	<b>2.2 (1.1-4.4)</b> (p=0.033)	67 (66.3%)	74 (78.7%)	<b>2.2 (1.1-4.3)</b> (p=0.026)

**Cohort 2 NIH (EPAG day 14 > 3 months): CR 26%, PR 61%, OR 87% at 6 months**

# Safety

	Arm A	Arm B	Total
Serious Adverse Events*	135	145	280
Fatal cases	14	8	22
Patients coming off study treatment prematurely requiring second line HSCT	13	11	24
Pregnancy	3	1	4

*\*Events are classified per SOC (system organ class) according to the CTCAE (Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (US National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health)).*

# Clonal evolution – myeloid malignancy

Arm	Age	AA	Cytogenetics/Karyotypic abnormalities			CE	MDS	somatic mutations +VAF			Response		Relapse
			Baseline	6 months	24 months			Baseline	6 months	24 months	3 mo	6 mo	
A	58	SAA	46XY	46, XY, +Y, -7[4]/46, XY[11]		Yes-6 mo	No	BCOR 0.1%, DNMT3A 1.24%, TET2 0.1%	BCOR 5.01%, DNMT3A 13.24% TET2 13.29%	NST	PR	CE	Yes
B	19	SAA	46,XX[16]	Not done or failed (del13q at 12 & 18 months)	Normal	Yes-12 mo	Yes	PIGA 7.74%	PIGA 7.15%	NST	PR	CR	No
B	62	SAA	46,XY [15]	46,XY,-13(q13q34)[2]/46,XY[18]	Unknown (persistent del13q at 12 and 18 months)	Yes-6 mo	No	No mutations	No mutations	NST	NR	NR	No
A	67	SAA	46, XY [20]	45,X,-Y[3]/46,XY[17]	46,XY,del(7)(q22q3?2)[7]/46,XY[18] (No del7q detected 6 and 12 months later)	No	No	No mutations	No mutations	BCOR 1.97%	NR	NR	No

# Clonal evolution – somatic mutations

Frequencies of mutations (%)

Variant allele frequency (log VAF)

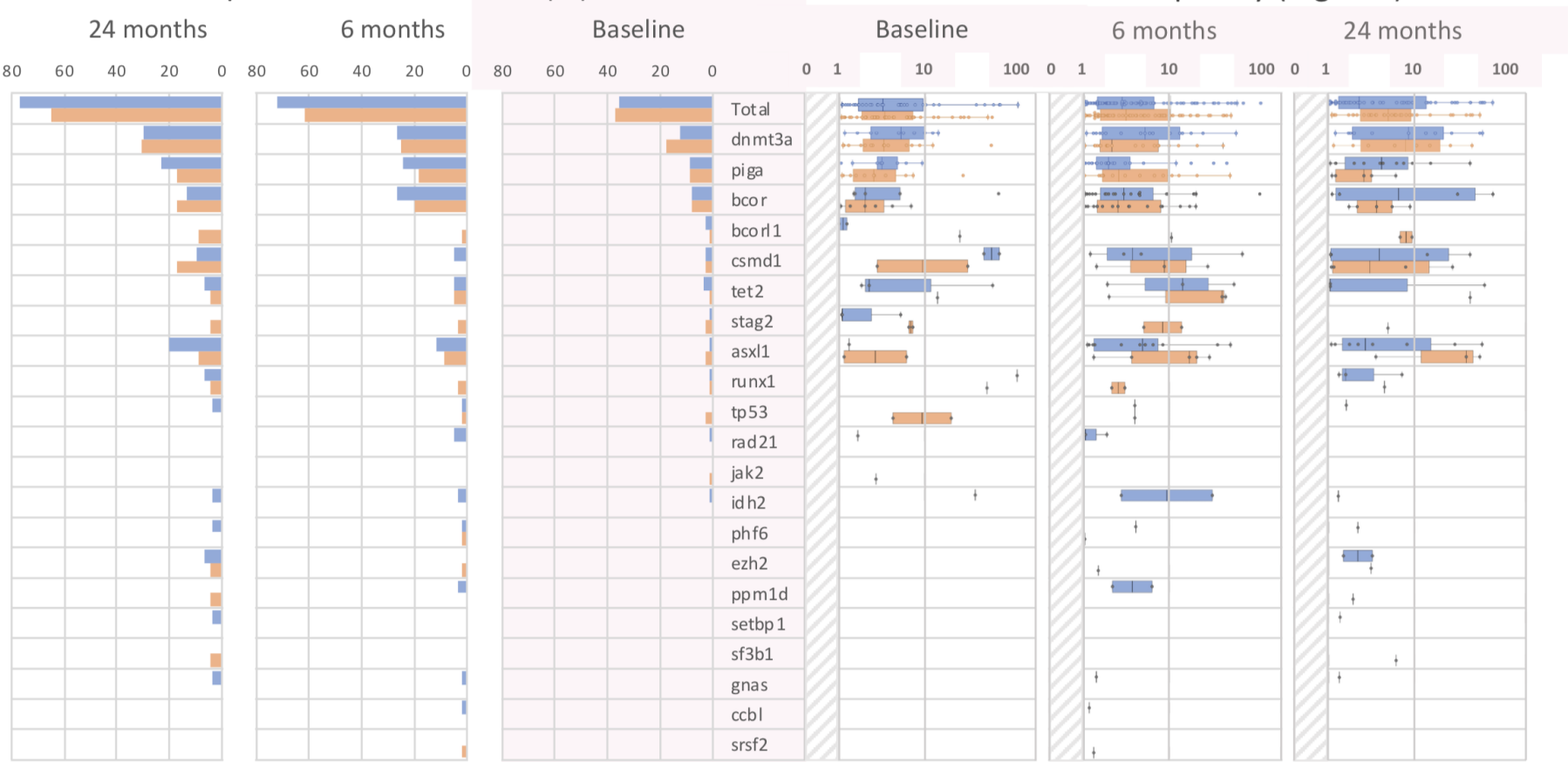


Figure 2A

Arm A Arm B

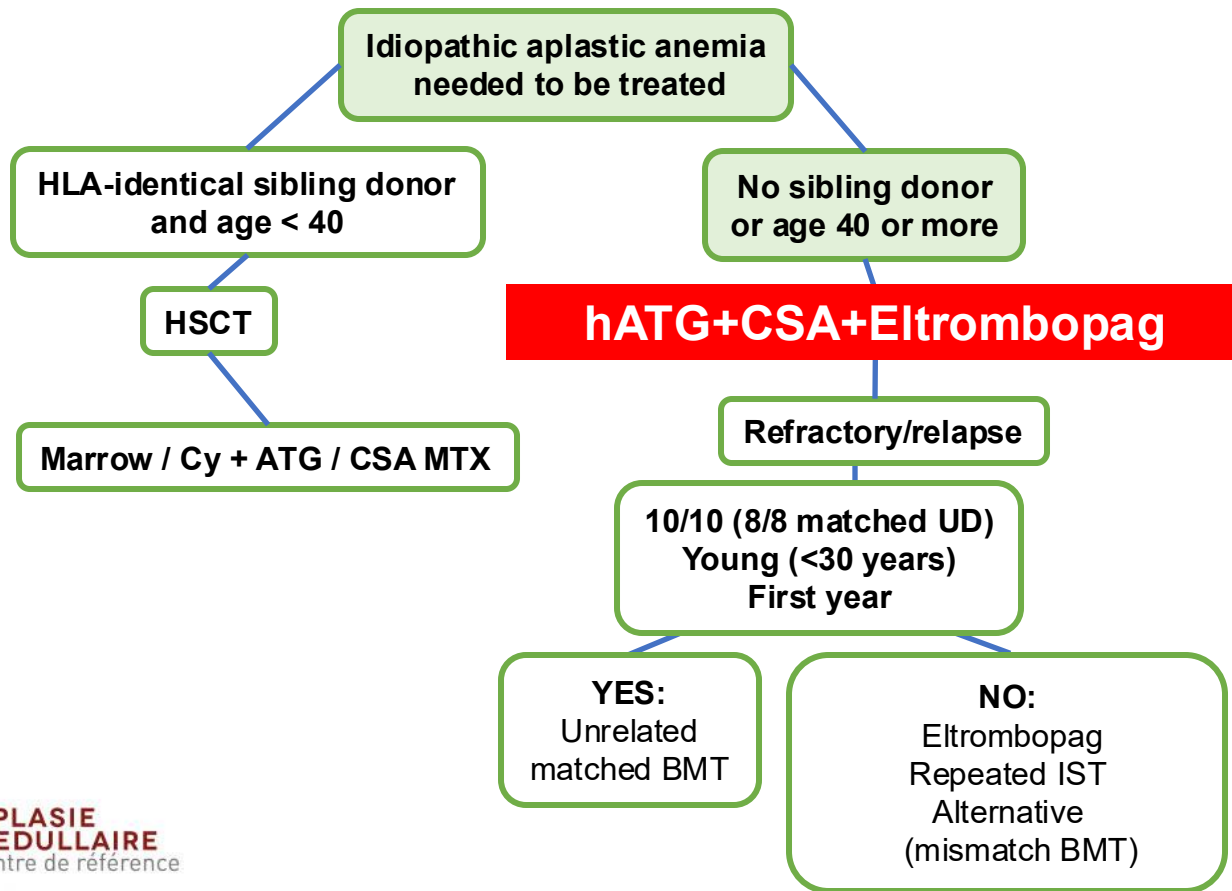
# Fatal cases

Cause of death	Arm A	Arm B	Total
Hemorrhages	2	0	2
Infections	9	4	13
Salvage treatment	1	0	1
Others:	2	4	6
• Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome	0	1	1
• Aortic valve disease	0	1	1
• Concomitant lung cancer	1	0	1
• Encephalopathy of unknown origin	1	0	1
• Tamponade	0	1	1
• Thrombosis	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>

# Conclusion - Perspectives

- EPAG, when added to standard IST (hATG and CsA), **significantly increases the rate of CR at 3 months** in untreated patients with SAA with **no safety concern** at time of analysis (18 months median follow-up).
- **Somatic myeloid mutations assessment (on going)**: high sensitivity next generation sequencing analysis was performed at baseline, 6 months and 24 months using a 31 gene target molecular bar coded panel central analysis (central analysis at King's College, London).
- Clonal evolution occurs 10-15 years after the diagnosis of aplastic anemia; the **Long term follow-up study (RACE-2)** is being set-up to answer this question in the future

# Treatment (guidelines)



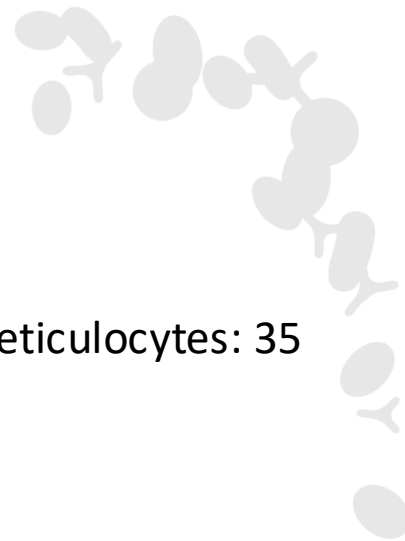


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Refractory at 6  
months ...

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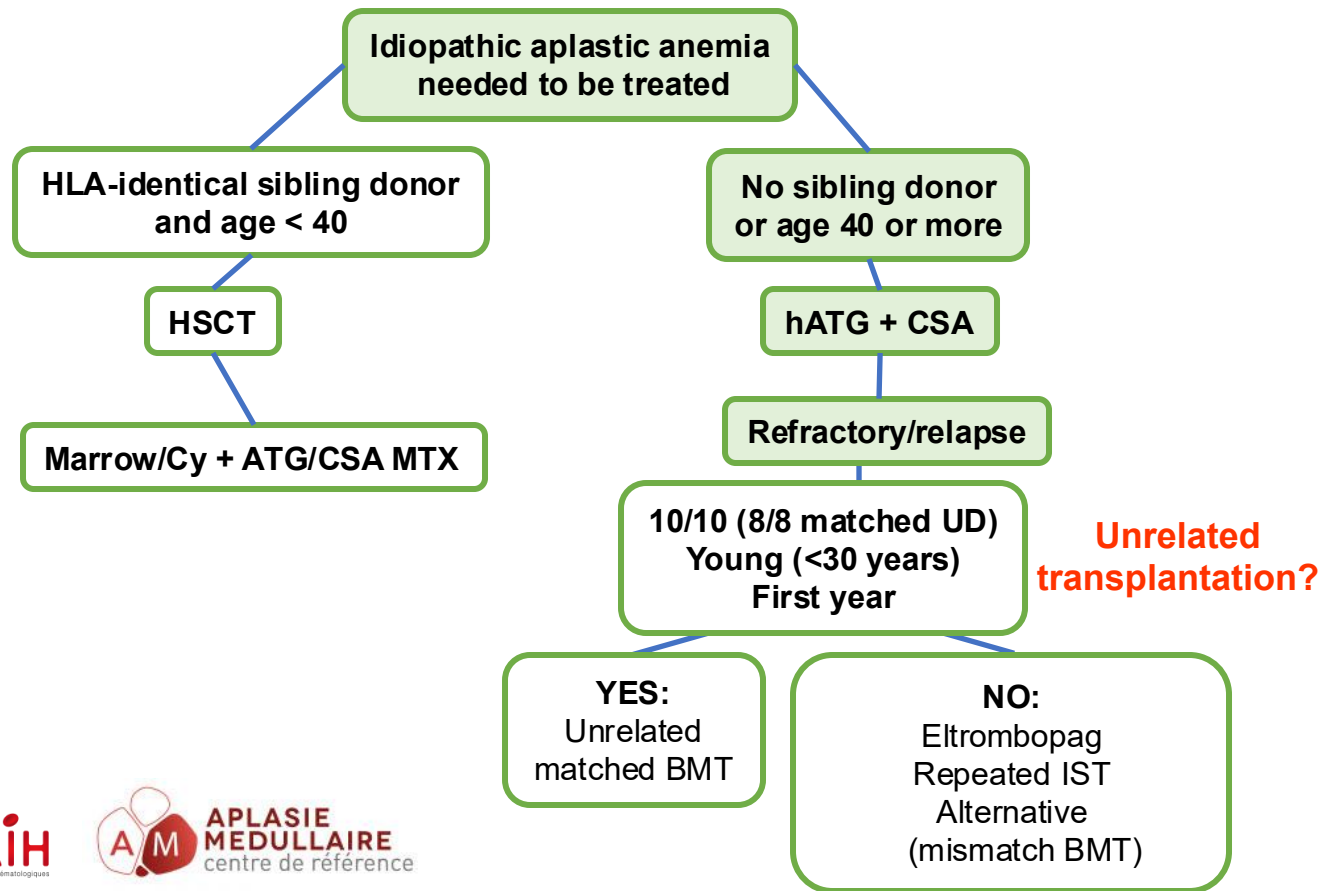


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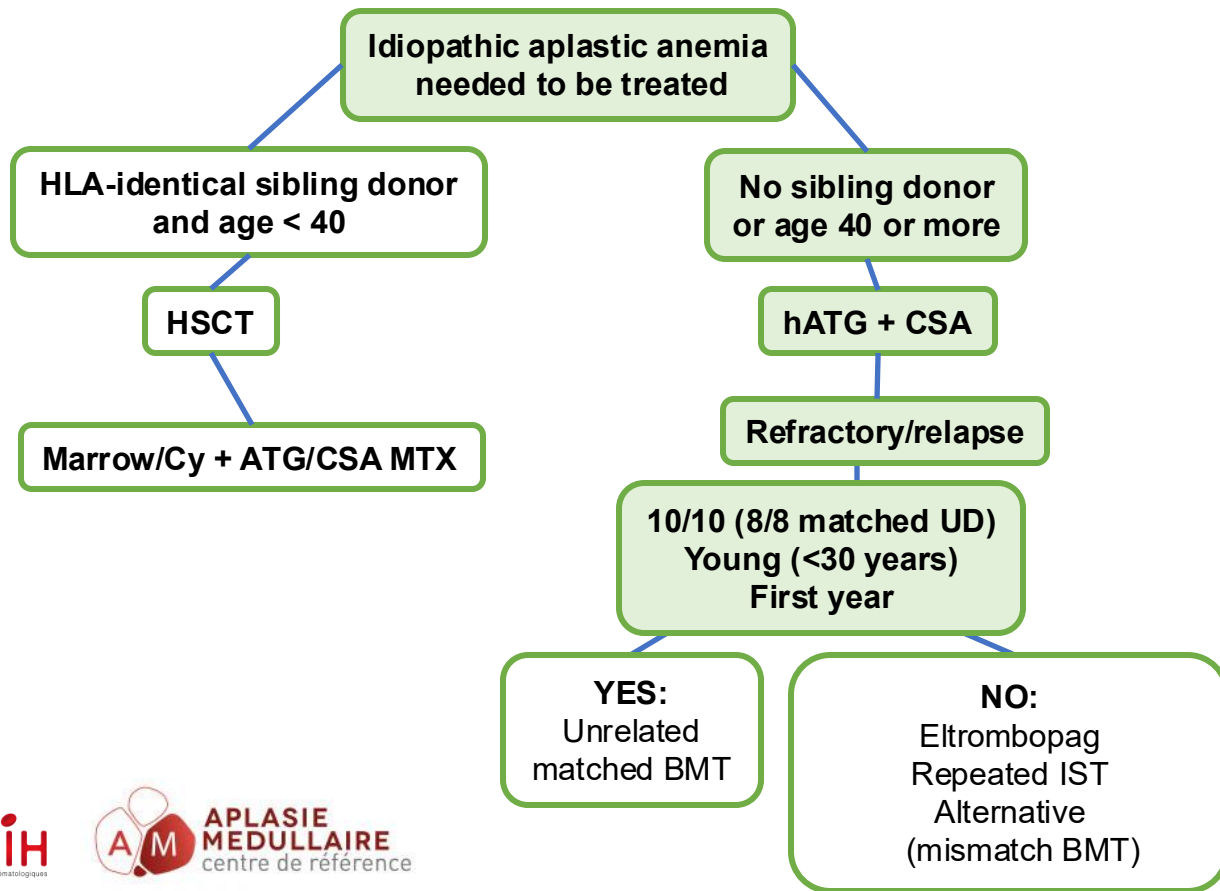
Refractory at 6 months ...

Inherited disorders?  
Clonal evolution?

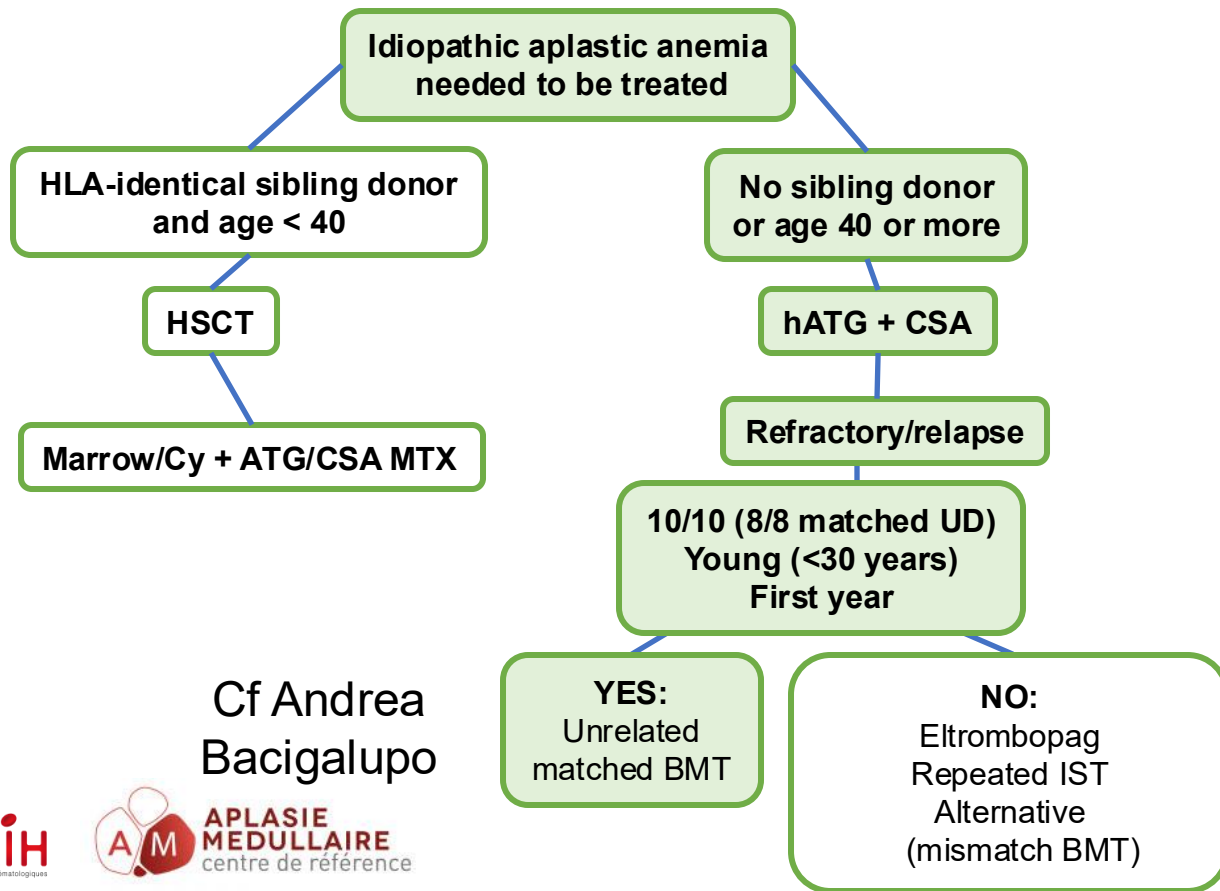
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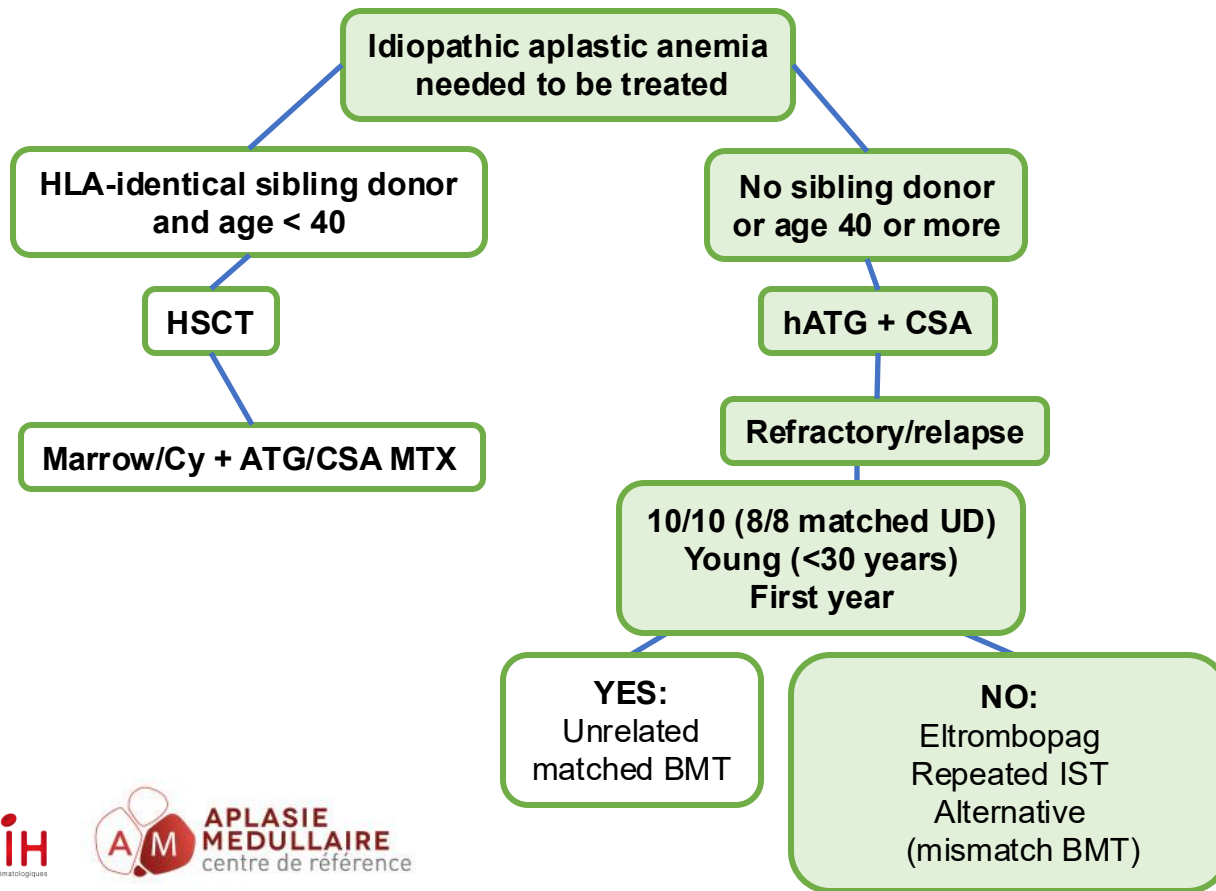


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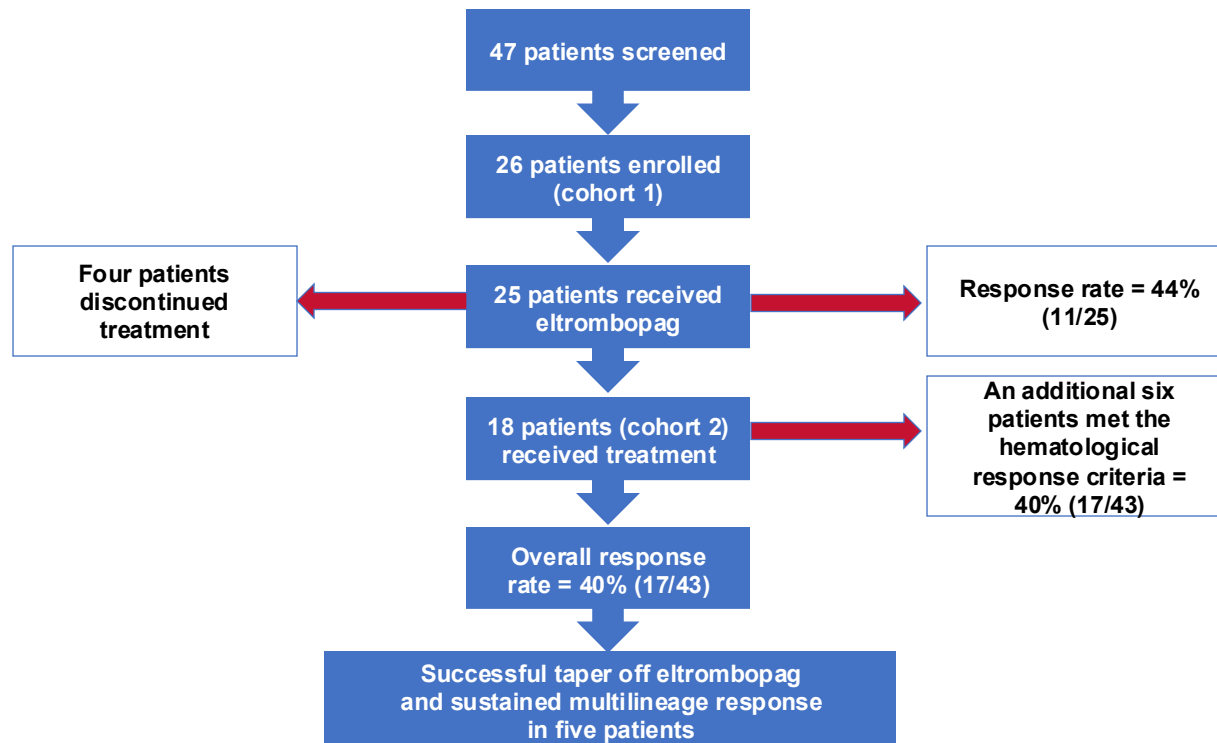
Cf Andrea  
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# Treatment (guidelines)



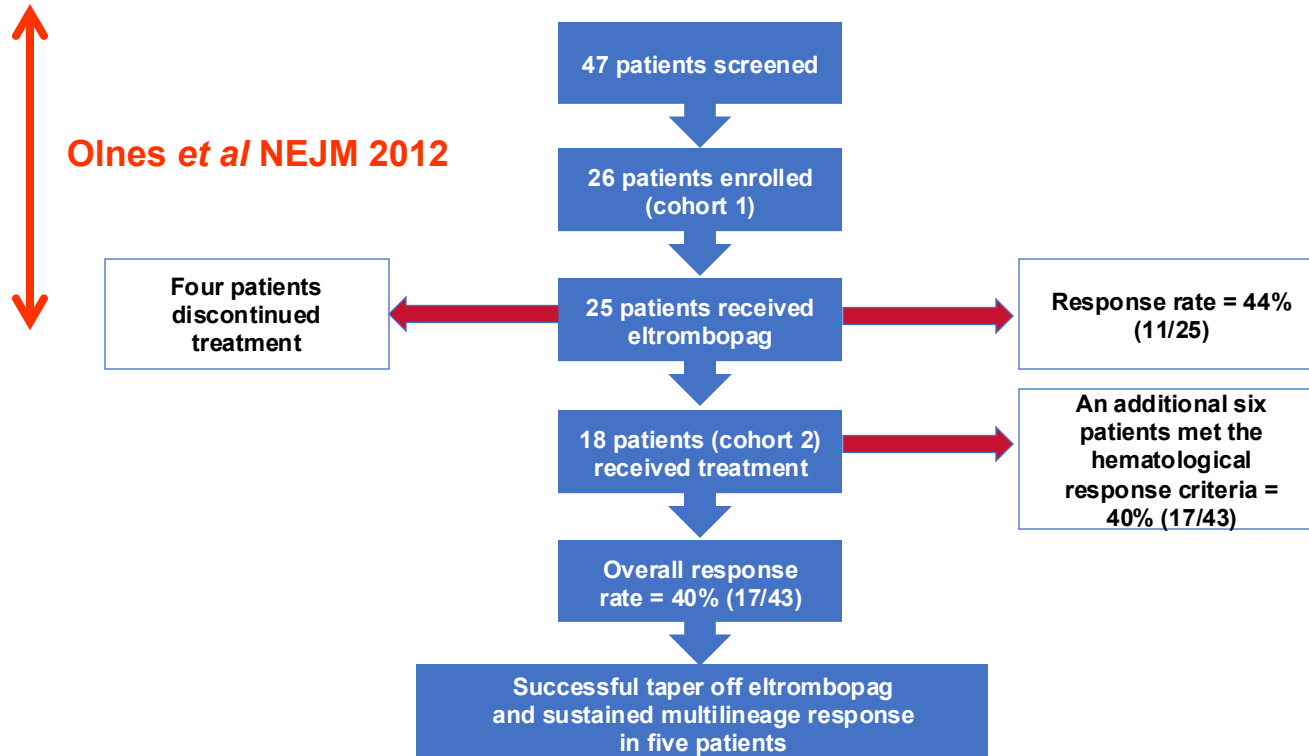
# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

## Response rate



# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

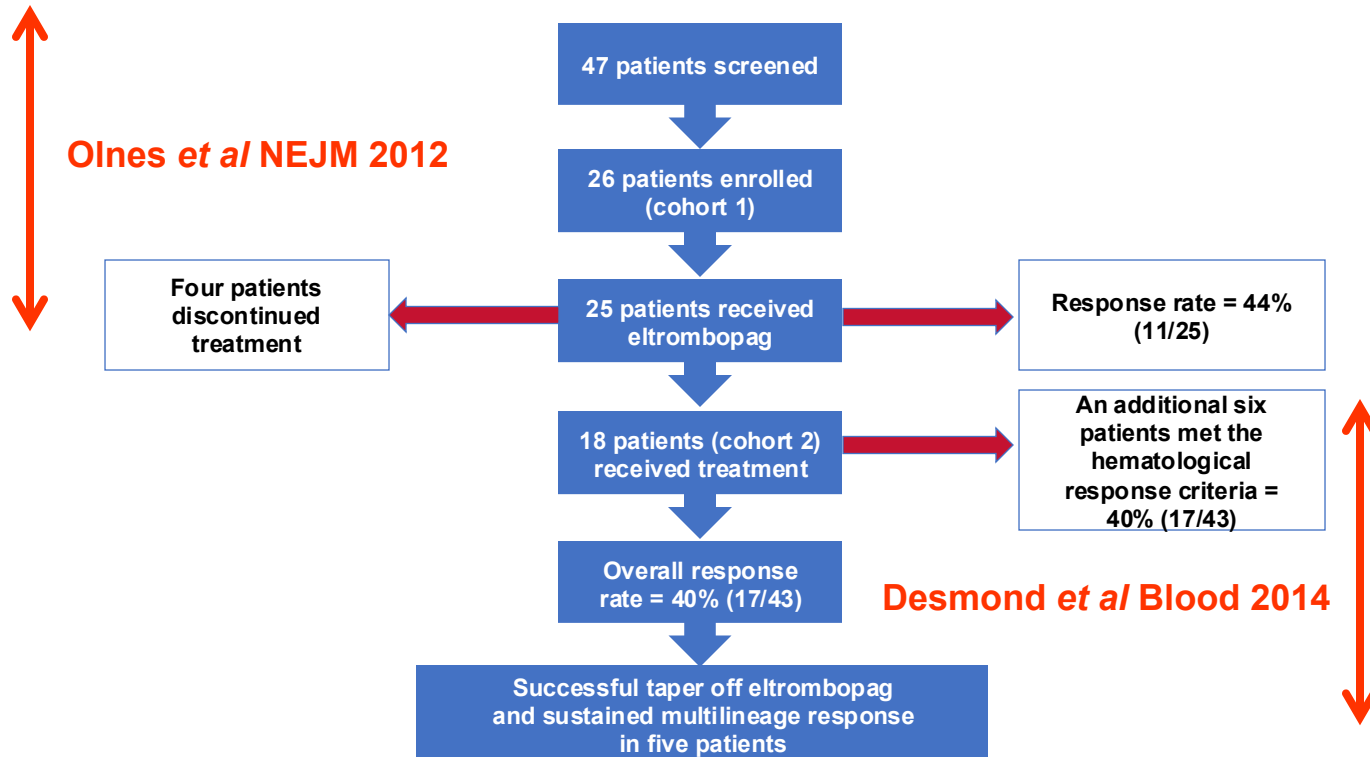
## Response rate





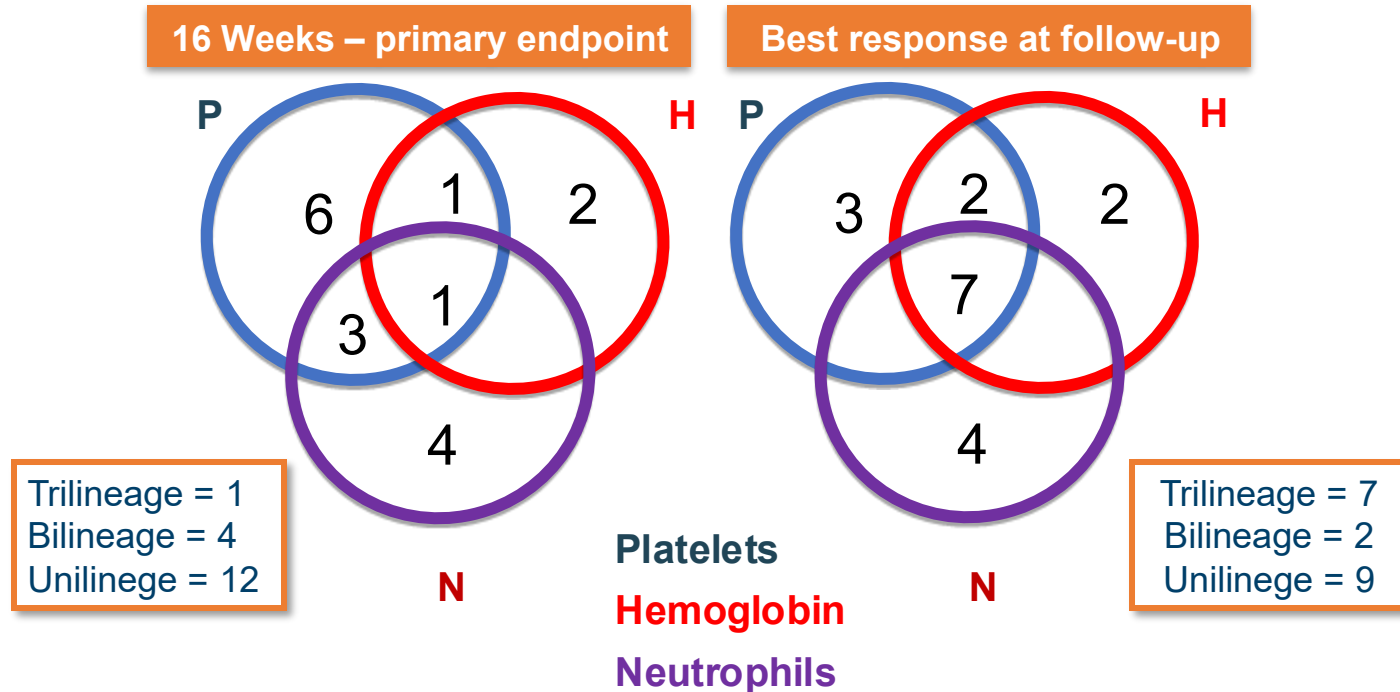
# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

## Response rate



# Phase II study of eltrombopag in refractory AA

## Multilineage responses



Durable multilineage responses are possible after treatment with eltrombopag in refractory AA  
Patients can become red blood cell and platelet transfusion independent

# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

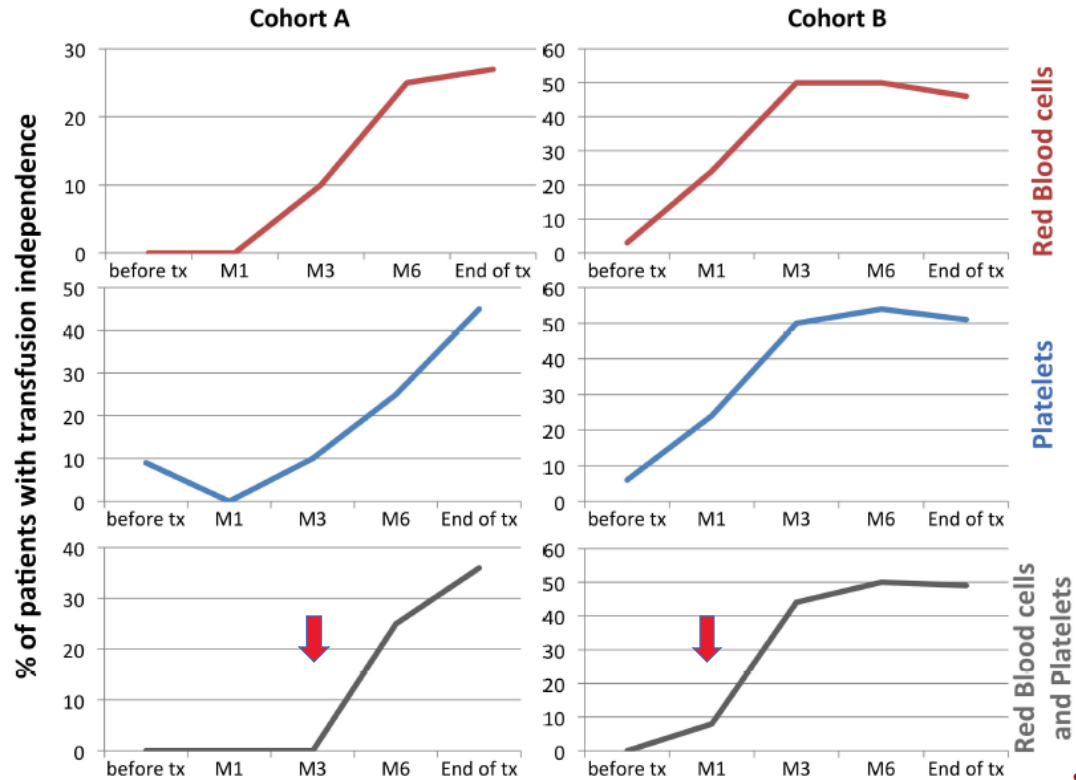
## French experience - patients characteristics

- ATG-naïve patients (Cohort A, n=11)
- Refractory patients (Cohort B, n=35)
- Disease characteristics:

	Cohort A	Cohort B	p-value
no. (%) [IQR]	11	35	
<u>Demographic characteristics</u>			
- Age at diagnosis (y)	73.7 [60.9, 77.5]	53.4 [26.3, 67.3]	0.003
- Age at ELT initiation (y)	74.1 [67.4, 78.0]	55.3 [35.9, 68.5]	0.003
- Male (%)	4 (36.4)	21 (60.0)	0.298
- Aplastic anemia characteristics			0.152
- Idiopathic, no PHN clone	4 (36.4)	23 (65.7)	
- Idiopathic, with PHN clone	6 (54.5)	11 (31.4)	
- Dyskeratosis congenita	1 (9.1)	1 (2.9)	

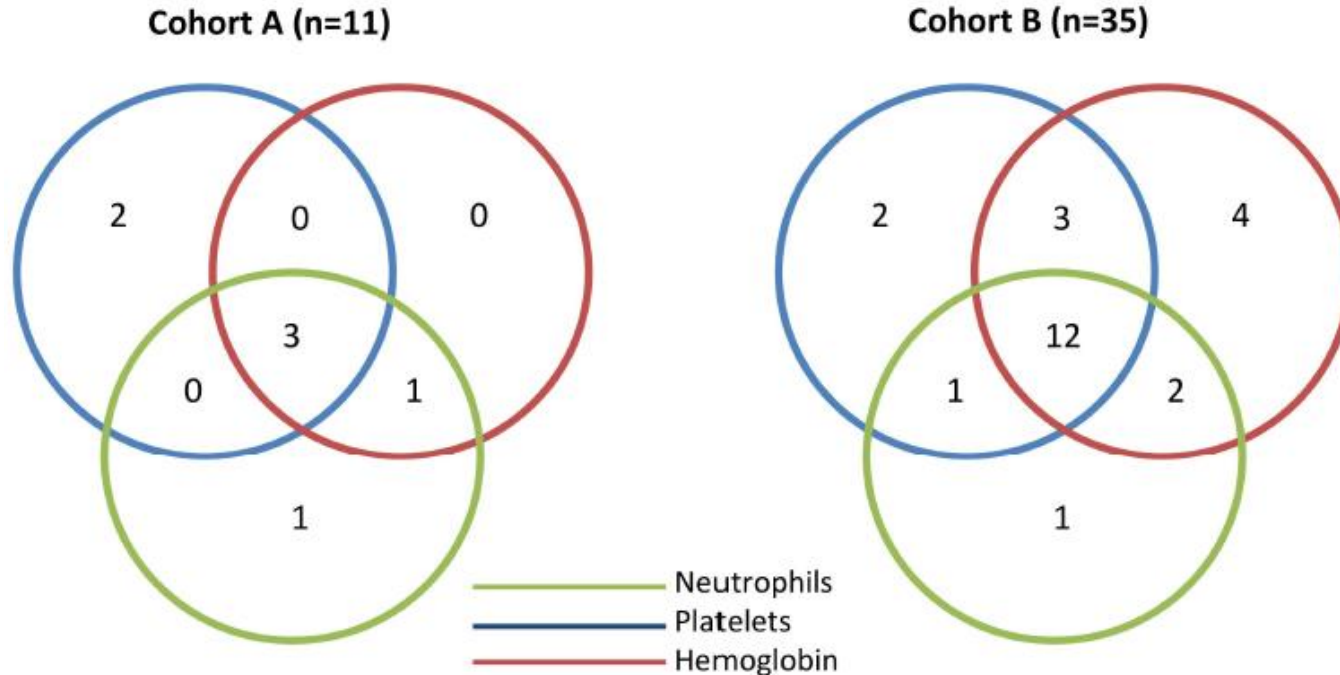
# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

## French experience – response rates



# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

French experience - type of response



**Durable multilineage responses are possible after treatment with eltrombopag in refractory AA**  
**Patients can become red blood cell and platelet transfusion independent**

# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

## French experience - main messages

- **Safety**
  - 1 SAE (liver toxicity)
  - Clonal evolution (lack of follow-up ...)
- **Response rate = 40%**
  - 3 months for refractory patients; 6 months for 1<sup>st</sup> line
  - Multi-lineage response = 30% among responders
- **Of note**
  - 20% of non responders responded at a higher dose (225 mg\*)
  - Possible drug discontinuation (if robust response)
  - Second IST including ATG (Revolade-ATG-CSA) lead to excellent results in refractory patients (response rate = 100% but n=8)

# TPO receptor agonist and refractory aplastic anemia

## Treatment stop

### Robust responders\*

- Platelets  $>50 \times 10^9/L$
- Hb  $>10$  g/dL
- Neutrophils  $>1 \times 10^9/L$
- **>8 weeks**



Decrease dose by 50%



Counts remain above limits for  
**8 weeks**

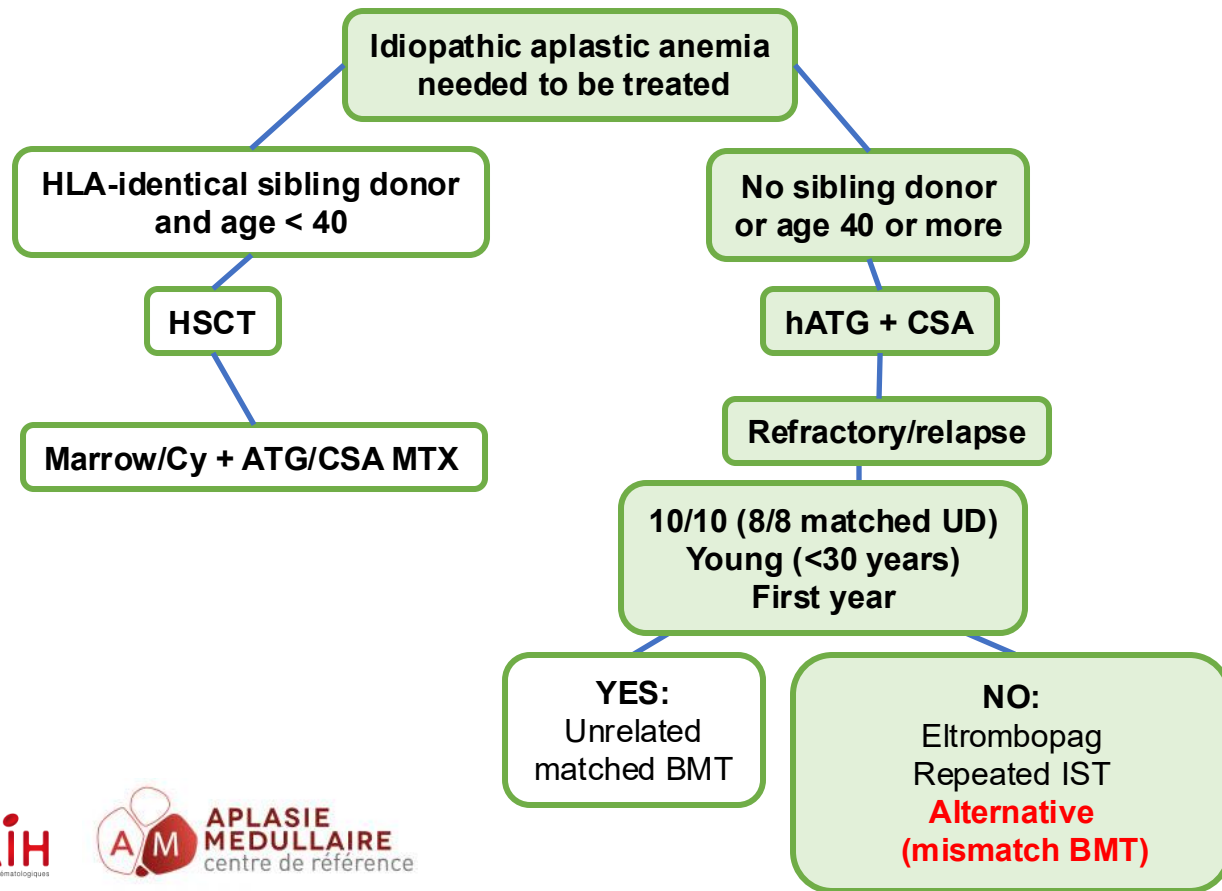


Discontinue drug

- **15** Patients stopped for ELT failure
- **1** Patients stopped for toxicity
- **4** Patients were able to taper and discontinue ELT treatment if they met the trilineage hematopoiesis criteria for **>8 weeks**
  - Four patients (n=46) fulfilled these criteria
  - All had eltrombopag tapered successfully to off drug
  - All remain in remission after a follow-up off drug of 7, 12, 24 and 27 months



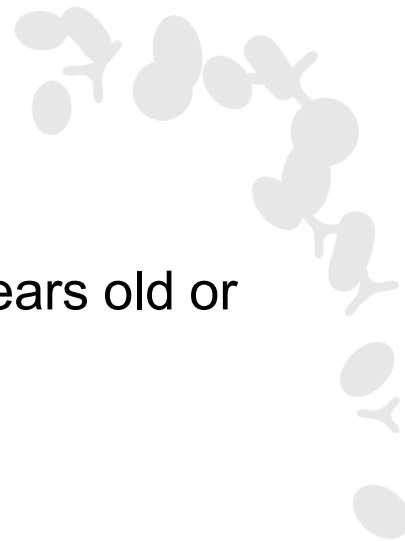
# Treatment (guidelines)



Cf Andrea  
Bacigalupo



## Conclusion



- **First line treatment:**

- MRD = choice treatment 1st line for patients of 40 years old or less
- MUD 1st line is still experimental (only pediatric)
- hATG+CSA+Eltrombopag for the others

- **Refractory patients:**

- MUD for patients with refractory AA of 30 years old or less is standard of care
- Alternative BMT mainly for young patients (20 year or less)
- Eltrombopag for the others (if no already used first line)

# Thank you!

## The French Reference Center for aplastic anemia and PNH in Paris



Saint-Louis Hospital



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