

# Case report

## Impact of Seroma Volume Reduction on Dosimetry in Whole Breast Radiation Therapy: A Case Study and Adaptive Planning Considerations

### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To explore the impact of seroma volume reduction on dosimetry during whole breast radiation therapy (WBRT) and evaluate the significance of adaptive planning.

**Presentation of Case:** A 71-year-old female with left breast invasive carcinoma underwent lumpectomy and radiotherapy. Initial CT (CT1) showed a seroma cavity, and a second CT (CT2) five weeks later documented a 65% seroma volume reduction (from 217 c.c. to 75 c.c.). Five radiotherapy techniques were evaluated: two-field conventional, three-field conventional, forward IMRT, inverse IMRT, and VMAT.

**Discussion:** The significant reduction in seroma volume affected dosimetry, highlighting the importance of adaptive planning. Inverse IMRT and VMAT showed better high-dose coverage but higher dose variability compared to conventional techniques. Regular imaging and adaptive planning are crucial to accommodate anatomical changes and ensure accurate dose delivery.

**Conclusion:** Accounting for seroma volume changes in WBRT planning is essential for optimizing treatment accuracy and patient outcomes. Advanced radiotherapy techniques combined with adaptive planning can significantly improve dosimetric precision and patient safety.

*Keywords:* Breast cancer, radiation therapy, seroma, dosimetry, breast-conserving treatment, adaptive planning

### 1. INTRODUCTION

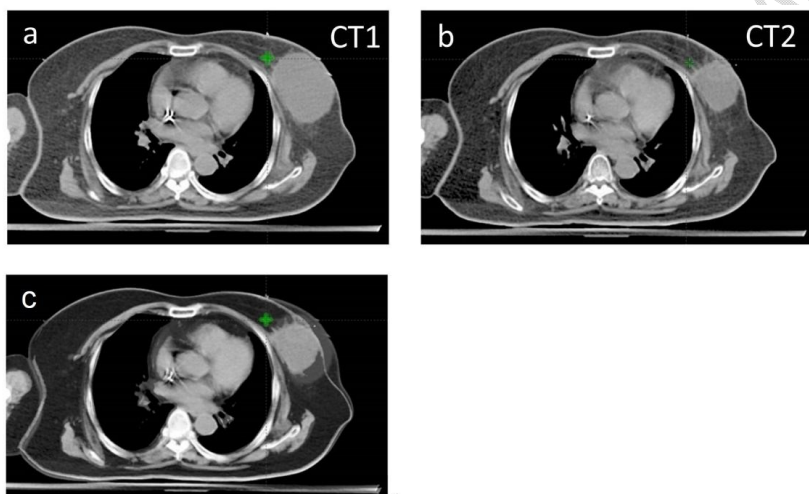
Breast-conserving treatment, which involves tumor excision followed by post-operative adjuvant radiation therapy, aims to preserve the breast while ensuring the remaining tissue is free of cancerous cells. However, the formation of seromas—fluid-filled cavities at the tumor bed—complicates radiation planning. Seromas can significantly alter the breast's shape and volume, posing a challenge in radiation therapy by shifting the target area, potentially leading to underdosing of the tumor bed or overdosing surrounding healthy tissue [1] [2]. The significant 65% volume reduction of seroma was found in this case. This study aims to explore the impact of seroma volume changes on dosimetry during WBRT and evaluate how different treatment techniques can accommodate these changes.

Comment [a1]: Radiation treatment planning

Comment [a2]: A significant

## 2. CASE REPORT

A 71-year-old female diagnosed with left breast invasive carcinoma underwent lumpectomy as part of her breast-conserving treatment. Following surgery, a computed tomography scan (CT1) revealed a seroma cavity. The proposed radiotherapy regimen included conformal radiotherapy using bilateral tangential photon beams and an anterior photon beam, delivering 46 Gy to the whole breast, followed by a 14 Gy electron beam boost targeting the tumor bed. Notable reduction in palpable breast dimensions prompted a second CT scan (CT2) before the electron beam boost, allowing for a direct comparison between initial and subsequent seroma volumes and dosimetry impact. A 65% volume (from 217 c.c. to 75 c.c.) reduction of seroma was found [Fig. 1].



**Fig. 1.(a) Initial CT (b) Second CT scan after five weeks (c) Image registration of CT1 and CT2 showing the reduction of seroma**

Five different techniques were developed and optimized to ensure the clinical target volume (CTV) received 95% of the prescribed dose for comparison purpose [Fig. 2] [Fig. 3]. These included:

**Comment [a3]:** How many weeks post surgery was the first CT scan done

**Comment [a4]:** If the patient was treated with the 46Gy, then you cannot use proposed

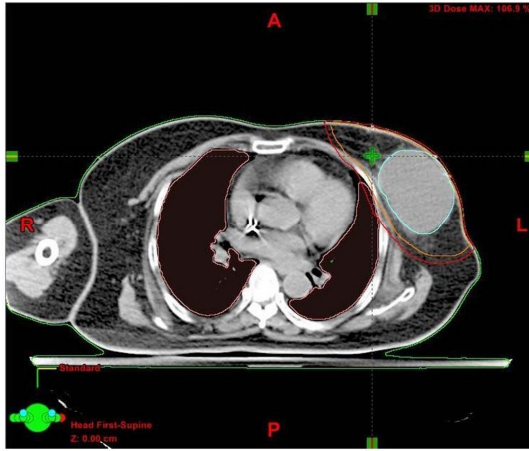
**Comment [a5]:** It would be appropriate to state who observed the reduction; oncologist or radiation therapists?

**Comment [a6]:** Again, if the patient had already received 46Gy photon beam, was this clinically necessary? Please explain further.

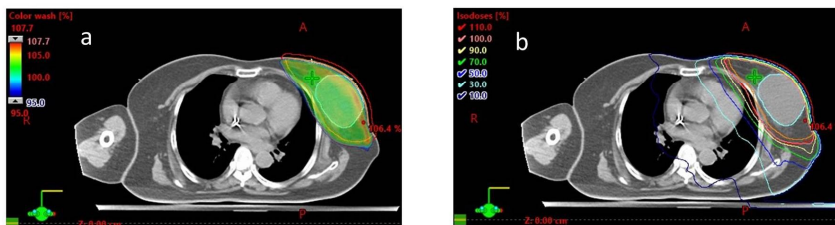
Was the second CT scan done purposely for the electron beam treatment?

Was the electron treatment planned using the treatment planning system or it was a clinical mark up.

What is the departmental protocol for treating intact breast with respect to the planning technique



**Fig.2. Contouring of seroma(cyan), CTV(orange), and PTV(red)**

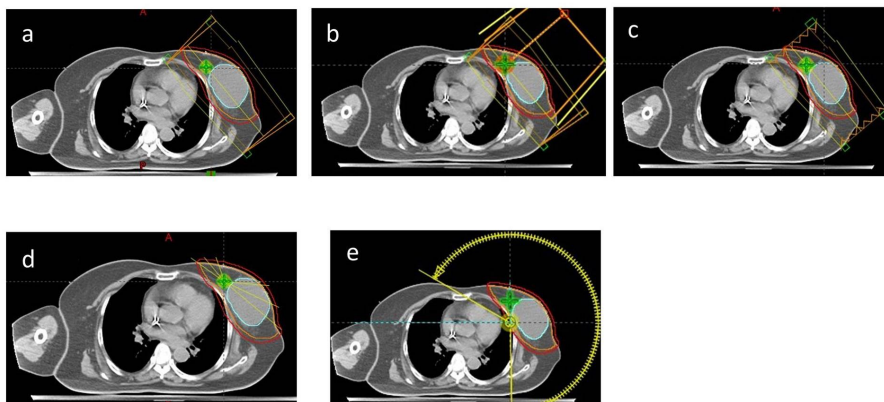


**Fig.3. Example of dose distribution using VMAT (a) Color wash (b) Isodose line**

1. Two-field Conventional Plan: Adjusted bilateral opposed tangent fields with a multileaf collimator (MLC) to shape the target and shield the lung and heart with physical wedge applied [Fig. 4a].
2. Three-field Conventional Plan: Added an anterior oblique field to mitigate unnecessary dose in the lateral axillary area [Fig. 4b].
3. Forward Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (Forward IMRT): Utilized MLC to conform to the target shape without wedge modulation [Fig. 4c].
4. Inverse Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (Inverse IMRT): Complex plans optimized using planning systems with numerous small segments/fields [Fig. 4d].
5. Volumetric-Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT): Modulated gantry speed, dose rate, and MLC during treatment delivery using an inverse planning method with a four-arc plan [Fig. 4e].

Registration was performed between CT1 and CT2, and the CT1 plan was subsequently applied to the CT2 image for dose calculation. Comparisons were then conducted between the two plans/images. The quality of each treatment plan was assessed through various dosimetric parameters, including maximum point dose (Dmax), CTV coverage, and the volume of irradiated normal tissue. The Reproducibility Index (RI) was used to evaluate consistency across different scans. A higher RI value approaching one indicates better reproducibility across different CT images.

Comment [a7]: images



**Fig.4. Different techniques of whole breast radiation therapy (WBRT) plans (a) Two-field plan (b) Three-field plan (c) Forward IMRT (d) Inverse IMRT (e) VMAT**

Table 1 provides a detailed comparison of various radiotherapy techniques based on parameters assessed on two CT scans (CT1 and CT2). Inverse IMRT and VMAT exhibited higher dose increases in Dmax and increases in hot spots, suggesting potential risks for overdosage. Conversely, the conventional two-field and three-field techniques demonstrated more stable target coverage but lower RI which indicated less favorable high-dose uniformity indices compared to inverse IMRT and VMAT.

Comment [a8]: what is accounting for this. Please explain

Comment [a9]: is there any reason for this which of the 5 techniques would you recommend a patient to be treated with

**Table 1. Comparison of dose metrics and reproducibility indices across different radiotherapy techniques**

Technique	Image	Dmax (%)	CTV V <sub>95</sub>	CTV V <sub>100</sub>	Hot spots	Hot spots	CTV <sub>95</sub>	CTV <sub>100</sub>
			(%)	(%)	V <sub>105</sub> (cm <sup>3</sup> )	V <sub>100</sub> (cm <sup>3</sup> )	RI	RI
Two-field	CT1	107.0	94.2	56.9	11.8	156.5		
	CT2	110.6	94.9	49.0	11.7	142.5	0.812	0.677
	CT2-CT1	3.6	0.7	-7.9	-0.1	-14.0		
Three-field	CT1	107.0	94.3	69.1	2.5	79.2		
	CT2	108.3	95.0	62.0	3.2	77.2	0.812	0.677

Comment [a10]: were the differences in each dose metric statistically significant?

	CT2-CT1	1.3	0.7	-7.1	0.7	-2.0		
Forward IMRT	CT1	107.1	93.1	50.7	10.5	104.3		
	CT2	109.8	92.9	47.5	6.8	94.9	0.809	0.663
	CT2-CT1	2.7	-0.2	-3.2	-3.7	-9.4		
Inverse IMRT	CT1	107.4	96.5	93.4	0.0	265.9		
	CT2	124.0	93.1	87.9	17.5	229.5	0.822	0.815
	CT2-CT1	16.6	-3.4	-5.5	17.5	-36.4		
VMAT	CT1	107.7	95.1	92.0	1.6	181.3		
	CT2	115.9	92.7	87.4	2.7	125.5	0.844	0.820
	CT2-CT1	8.2	-2.4	-4.6	1.1	-55.8		

\*CTV V95: percentage volume of CTV covered by 95% prescribed dose

\*CTV V100: percentage volume of CTV covered by 100% prescribed dose

\*Hot spots V105: volume covered by 105% prescribed dose and located outside CTV

\*Hot spots V100: volume covered by 100% prescribed dose and located outside CTV

\*RI (Reproducibility index) = (overlapping volume of CTV' and CTV'')<sup>2</sup> / (CTV' x CTV'')

\*CTV' represents the overlapping volume of the prescribed 95% dose in CT1

\*CTV'' represents the overlapping volume of the prescribed 95% dose in CT2

### 3. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study emphasize the dynamic nature of seroma cavities following breast-conserving surgery and the impact of these changes on radiation therapy planning. Seroma volume changes can significantly impact dose delivery accuracy in WBRT.[3] The study documented a 65% reduction in seroma cavity volume over five weeks, emphasizing the evolving nature of post-surgical breast anatomy. Techniques like inverse IMRT and VMAT, while providing better high-dose coverage uniformity, exhibited higher dose variability.

The optimal timing for the initiation of radiation therapy post-surgery remains a balance between allowing seroma stabilization and minimizing the delay to reduce the risk of local recurrence.[4] [5] [This study's results suggest that starting radiation therapy within 4-6 weeks post-surgery, combined with adaptive planning, could offer a practical approach. Adaptive radiotherapy techniques that can account for these anatomical shifts.[6] [7]

Regular imaging can help address changes in seroma volume. Techniques such as cone-beam CT (CBCT) during treatment can enable timely adjustments to the radiation plan, ensuring accurate dose delivery and minimizing the risk to surrounding healthy tissue.

**Comment [a11]:** what accounted for the 65% reduction in seroma cavity volume

**Comment [a12]:** this study did not indicate how many weeks post surgery the patient had the first CT and treatment

**Comment [a13]:** Please elaborate on this

**Comment [a14]:** Is this patient, which imaging protocols were used. Was it kV imaging or MV imaging.

Advanced Radiotherapy Techniques: Inverse IMRT and VMAT demonstrated better consistency and reliability in high-dose coverage compared to conventional techniques. These advanced methods, combined with adaptive planning, can enhance treatment precision, particularly in the context of dynamic anatomical changes post-surgery.

**Comment [a15]:** Please elaborate more on this point because after surgery the patient undergoes radiotherapy so at what point does this apply

The case report's findings are based on a single patient's experience, and future research should focus on evaluating the long-term outcomes of patient with significant seroma volume changes and leveraging technological advancements in imaging and radiotherapy to enhance the treatment precision.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of accounting for seroma volume changes in WBRT planning. Advanced radiotherapy techniques, combined with adaptive planning, can significantly improve treatment accuracy and patient outcomes. Ongoing research and technological advancements are essential to further refine these approaches and ensure optimal care for patients undergoing breast-conserving therapy.

**Comment [a16]:** Again, per the report, the 65% reduction was observed after the patient had received 46Gy. So at what point should seroma volume be considered. If there is seroma, it will show in the first CT scan prior to treatment planning.

#### CONSENT

The authors report that they have the patient's consent, which is available upon request.

The stated conclusion does not correlate with the information presented.

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was reviewed and approved by the CGMH Institutional Review Boards (number: 201801223B0). The IRB determined that the study met all ethical guidelines, and that patient consent was not required due to the retrospective nature of the research.

#### DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The authors used ChatGPT-4 (OpenAI, version GPT-4o) solely for grammar correction and text refinement in this manuscript. All factual accuracy checks, citations, and content verification were conducted by the authors.

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