



## Original Articles

## CGCG clinical practice guidelines for the management of adult diffuse gliomas



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## ABSTRACT

The Chinese Glioma Cooperative Group (CGCG) Guideline Panel for adult diffuse gliomas provided recommendations for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. The Panel covered all fields of expertise in neuro-oncology, i.e. neurosurgeons, neurologists, neuropathologists, neuroradiologists, radiation and medical oncologists and clinical trial experts. The task made clearer and more transparent choices about outcomes considered most relevant through searching the references considered most relevant and evaluating their value. The scientific evidence of papers collected from the literature was evaluated and graded based on the Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine Levels of Evidence and recommendations were given accordingly. The recommendations will provide a framework and assurance for the strategy of diagnostic and therapeutic measures to reduce complications from unnecessary treatment and cost. The guideline should serve as an application for all professionals involved in the management of patients with adult diffuse glioma and also as a source of knowledge for insurance companies and other institutions involved in the cost regulation of cancer care in China.

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## Introduction

There is currently no clear national consensus for the optimal diagnosis and treatment of adult gliomas. This guideline developed is primarily an effort to assess the evidence for management of adult gliomas in a manner that sets a benchmark for further improvement, and to document the recommendations of the Chinese Glioma Cooperative Group (CGCG) in patients with gliomas. It covers WHO grade II/III astrocytomas, oligodendrogliomas, and oligoastrocytomas; and WHO grade IV glioblastomas. The guideline includes diagnosis (including neuroimaging, pathology and molecular information), general management strategy and specific treatment plans for gliomas, supportive care and response evaluation and follow-up. It has also been circulated to CGCG members, including neurosurgeons, medical and radiation oncologists, neuropathologists, neuroradiologists and epidemiologists for comments before the final consensus document was drawn up.

These recommendations provided are set forth for conscientious use by the practicing physician who must take into account all of the circumstances in the supervision of a given individual illness. Furthermore, the recommendations could serve as a valuable source of information for multidisciplinary medical professionals, patients, relatives, and official health departments.

## Epidemiology and survival

According to the multicenter cross-sectional study on brain tumor (MCSBT) in China [1], age standardized prevalence of primary brain tumor is 22.52 per million for all populations and gliomas account for 31.1% in those aged 20–59 years. Diffuse gliomas are diagnosed as astrocytomas, oligoastrocytomas and oligodendrogliomas of grades II and III and glioblastomas (GBM) of grade IV based on the 2007 World Health Organization (WHO) CNS tumors classification [2]. Diffuse and anaplastic astrocytomas represent about 25.2% of gliomas. Oligoastrocytic tumors and oligodendrogliomas, including anaplastic oligodendrogliomas, account for about 18% of gliomas. And glioblastomas occupy about 30% of CNS gliomas [3].

Based on the Chinese Glioma Genome Atlas (CGGA) statistics, malignant gliomas have an unfavorable prognosis with median overall survival times (OS) of 78.1 months for low-grade gliomas (WHO Grade II), 37.6 months for anaplastic gliomas and 14.4 months for GBMs. For low-grade gliomas, the 6-month, 1-, 3-, and 5-year OS rates were 99, 94, 79 and 67%, respectively; for anaplastic gliomas, they were 88, 75, 51 and 36%, respectively; and for GBMs, they were 87, 61, 15 and 9%, respectively [4].

## Diagnosis and pathology

Gliomas are diagnosed using morphological criteria according to WHO classification [2]. Diffuse astrocytoma cells histologically represent stellate, spindle-shaped with fiber like processes, or plump with a large eosinophilic cytoplasmic mass. Anaplastic astrocytomas show more malignant cytological features – cellularity, anaplasia and mitoses. Glioblastoma arises most commonly *de novo* (primary glioblastoma). Some glioblastomas arise by malignant transformation of lower-grade astrocytomas (secondary glioblastoma) [5]. Primary glioblastomas are more common in older patients and are more aggressive. Microscopically, glioblastoma shows high cellularity, cellular and nuclear anaplasia, mitoses, microvascular proliferation, and necrosis. Oligodendroglioma cells, microscopically, are uniform and have round central nuclei with fine chromatin surrounded by a clear halo (unstained cytoplasm), which is an artifact of processing. Oligodendrogliomas are traversed by a delicate capillary network and have a tendency to calcify, which is helpful in radiological and histological diagnoses. Some oligodendrogliomas contain neoplastic astrocytes which are mixed with the oligodendroglial cells or grow in adjacent but separate areas. Such mixed tumors are called oligoastrocytomas. Oligodendrogliomas and oligoastrocytomas can be classified as low-grade (WHO grade II) or high grade/anaplastic (WHO grade III) based on cellularity, anaplasia, mitotic activity, microvascular proliferation, and necrosis.

## Molecular biomarkers

## IDH mutation

Mutations in the isocitrate dehydrogenase (IDH) gene primarily locate at codon R132 in *IDH1* and R172 in *IDH2*. *IDH1/2* mutations are the earliest genetic alteration and mainly occur in WHO grade II and III astrocytic and oligodendroglial tumors and in secondary GBMs, which develop from lower grade astrocytomas [6]. *IDH2* mutations are less frequent compared with *IDH1* mutations. However, *IDH 1/2* play the same role, catalyzing the oxidative carboxylation of isocitrate to  $\alpha$ -ketoglutarate, resulting in the reduction of NADP to NADPH [7]. *IDH1/2* mutational status is of notable diagnostic value, and particularly rare in primary glioblastoma [8]. *IDH1/2* mutations commonly indicate a favorable prognosis independent of WHO grades [7,9,10].

## Codeletion of chromosomal arms 1p and 19q

Combined loss of chromosomal arms 1p and 19q resulting from an unbalanced t(1;19)(q10;p10) leads to loss of heterozygosity [11],

associated with oligodendroglial histology and rarely found in other tumors [12]. Patients with tumors lacking 1p and 19q have longer median survival times and progression-free survival [13,14]. Most oligodendrogliomas with 1p and 19q codeletion also carry mutations in the *CIC* gene on chromosome 19q and the *FUBP1* gene on chromosome 1p [15–17].

#### MGMT promoter methylation and miR-181d

Methylation of O(6)-methylguanine–DNA methyl transferase (*MGMT*) promoter, a prognostic and predictive factor [18,19], correlates with benefit from alkylating agent chemotherapy in patients with *IDH1* wild type malignant gliomas of WHO grades III/IV [20]. Besides epigenetic silencing, *miR-181d* also leads to decreased mRNA stability and/or reduced protein translation by binding to the 3' untranslated region of *MGMT* transcripts, and predicts the survival and response of alkylating agent chemotherapy in glioblastoma [21–23].

#### EGFRVIII

The *EGFRVIII*, a characteristic deletion exons 2–7 of the *EGFR* gene, is expressed in approximately 20–30% of primary GBM, resulting in constitutive and ligand-independent receptor activity and regarded as an important oncogenic mutation [24,25]. Long-term survival might be worse in patients whose tumors carry this mutation than in those who do not. As *EGFRVIII* is most common in primary GBM and is not expressed on normal tissues, it is an effective target for immunotherapy [26].

#### ATRX mutations or loss

Mutations of alpha thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked (*ATRX*) strongly correlated with its loss of expression, and may predict better prognosis in astrocytic tumors with *IDH* mutations [15,27]. *ATRX* mutation or loss of expression results in ALT and genomic instability [28,29]. The protein encoded by *ATRX* plays multiple cellular roles, including chromatin remodeling at telomeres [30,31]. Furthermore, loss of *ATRX* expression may define a subgroup of astrocytic tumors with a more favorable prognosis [9,27].

#### TERT promoter mutation

Telomerase reverse transcriptase (*TERT*), which is essential in maintaining telomere length and its activity, is pathologically increased in gliomas. Recurrent mutations in the promoter region of *TERT* most occurred in oligodendroglial tumors and primary glioblastoma, leading to *TERT* upregulation [32]. The prognostic value of *TERT* promoter mutation remains controversial in *IDH* wild type glioblastoma [33,34]. Combined analysis of 1p/19q codeletion, *IDH* and *TERT* promoter mutational status may contribute to define prognostic subgroups of gliomas [35–38].

#### Ki-67

Ki-67 is a nuclear protein expressed during the G1, S, G2 and M phases of the cell cycle, and has been widely used as a stable marker of cell proliferation in various types of human tumors, including malignant gliomas [39]. Ki-67 is an independent prognostic indicator, associated with poor survival in gliomas regardless of WHO grades [4,9].

Recent published studies [35,40–42] validated prior reports that specific combinations of genetic alternations in *IDH1/2*, *TERT*, *ATRX* and codeletion of 1p/19q have the ability to reclassify gliomas into rational subsets, defining a glioma's biological and clinical behaviors more accurately than stratifications based solely on

histopathology. Lower grade gliomas (WHO grade II and III gliomas) have an extremely high frequency of *IDH1/2* mutation, which is accompanied either by 1p and 19q codeletion and a mutated *TERT* promoter or by *TP53* mutations with or without *ATRX* mutations. Grade II or III astrocytomas mainly depicted the mutations in *IDH1/2*, *ATRX* and *TP53*, while grade II and III oligodendrogliomas are characterized by 1p/19q codeletion and the mutations in *IDH1/2* and *TERT* promoter. Numerous evidence showed that oligoastrocytomas (WHO grades II and III) may segregate into two groups, genetically matching oligodendroglioma on one and astrocytoma on the other side based on the molecular information, for example, *IDH1/2*, 1p/19q and *ATRX*, and so on [43,44]. Most lower grade gliomas without an *IDH* mutation were molecularly and clinically similar to glioblastoma [40]. The detailed information of these molecular markers above and their clinical relevance are listed in Table 1.

## Disease management

### General recommendations

Management of gliomas requires a multidisciplinary approach and involves neuroimaging, surgery, neuropathology, radiation therapy (RT), chemotherapy and supportive care. Karnofsky performance score, neurological function, and age need to be considered in clinical decision making in neuro-oncology.

Neuroimaging enables the noninvasive evaluation of glioma and is considered to be one of the key factors for individualized therapy and patient management, since accurate diagnosis and demarcation of viable tumor tissue is required for treatment planning as well as assessment of treatment response [45]. Computed tomography (CT) scanning can demonstrate the tumor and associated findings; however, in making the glioma diagnosis, CT scanning is not sensitive enough and may cause small tumors to be missed. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is significantly more sensitive to the presence of tumor, as well as its proportion and location, which will help guide diagnostic interventions such as biopsy and treatment including surgery and radiation [46,47]. Positron emission tomography (PET) scanning is also a useful supporting method in the evaluation of gliomas, particularly for differential diagnosis. PET scanning with 18-fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) is positive in cases of active tumor, which shows high metabolic activity and glucose utilization [48].

Surgical resection remains essential to the management of gliomas across all grades. Maximal safe resection should be attempted to protect patients' neurological functions [49]. Gross total resection is proposed as the result of its association with better clinical outcome [50]. Meanwhile, many tools are available to increase the extent of resection, while keeping the risk of new neurological deficits at a low level, including surgical navigation systems housing functional MRI datasets, intraoperative MRI, and intraoperative functional monitoring [51]. However, it is also recommended that biopsy, or partial resection, may all be considered as the initial management of gliomas depending on the condition of the patient, the size and location of the tumor, and so on [52]. Awake surgery may help neurosurgeon to remove tumors which are too close to the functional brain areas that control vision, language and body movements [53]. Furthermore, surgical resection could improve tumor related seizure control, particularly in patients with a long epileptic history [54,55].

A sufficient amount of tumor tissue should be obtained for histology and molecular analyses through resection or biopsy. The inclusion of molecular parameters in the WHO definition of brain tumors has been forwarded as the "ISN-Haarlem" consensus [56]. The "integrated" diagnosis was recommended based on histology and stepwise analysis with initial immunohistochemistry for *ATRX* and *IDH1-R132H* followed by 1p/19q status analysis and *IDH1* and

**Table 1**  
Molecular biomarkers and their clinical relevance in gliomas.

Clinical importance	IDH1/2 mutation	1p/19q codeletion	MGMT promoter methylation	EGFR vIII	ATRX loss or mutation	TERT promoter mutation	miR-181d	Ki-67
Methods of assessment	IHC; pyrosequencing	FISH	MSP; bisulfite (pyro) sequencing	rtPCR; IHC; MLPA	IHC; Sanger sequencing	Sanger sequencing	qPCR, ISH	IHC
Frequency (%)								
Diffuse astrocytoma	70–80	15	40–50	0	70	18	NA	5
Oligoastrocytoma	50–70	30–60	60–80	0	50–60	31	NA	5
Oligodendroglioma	70–80	30–60	60–80	0	14	68–79	NA	5
Anaplastic astrocytoma	50–70	15	50	0	60–80	18	NA	35–48
Anaplastic oligoastrocytoma	50–70	50–80	70	0	70–80	31	NA	35–48
Anaplastic oligodendrogliomas	50–80	50–80	70	0	7	68–79	NA	35–48
Glioblastoma	Pri:5–10; Sec:57	<5	35	25–30	Pri:4; Sec:57	50–74	50	64
Biological role	Increased concentrations of 2-hydroxyglutarate, association with G-CIMP phenotype	Unclear, link to candidate genes CIC and FUBP1	Silencing DNA damage repair, association with G-CIMP + in IDH1/2-mutated tumors	Constitutive activation of downstream pro-oncogenic pathways	Telomere dysfunction, genomic destabilization	Overexpression of TERT, maintain telomerase activity	Downregulate MGMT, K-ras, and Bcl-2 expression	A nuclear protein expressed during the G1, S, G2 and M phases of the cell cycle, used as a stable marker of cell proliferation
Diagnostic role	Differential diagnosis between diffuse glioma and gliosis	Oligodendroglial lineage	None	Association with glioblastoma	Astrocytic lineage	Association with primary glioblastoma or oligodendroglial lineage	None	None
Prognostic role	Favorable survival in IDH-mutated tumors	Favorable survival in 1p/19q codeletion tumors	Favorable survival in high grade astrocytic tumors	Unfavorable survival	Favorable survival in astrocytic tumors	Contradictory	Favorable survival in glioblastoma	Unfavorable survival
Predictive role	Absence of mutation suggests predictive role for MGMT promoter methylation	Patients for (anaplastic) oligodendrogliomas treated with early alkylating agents	Predictive for glioblastoma (elderly patients, without IDH mutation) treated with alkylating agents	Possible biomarker for vaccination	None	Potential biomarker for targeted therapy	Predictive for glioblastoma treated with alkylating agents	None

Abbreviations: IHC, immunohistochemistry; FISH, fluorescence in-situ hybridization; MSP, methylation-specific PCR; rtPCR, real-time PCR; MLPA, multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification; Pri, primary; Sec, secondary. Table revised from refs [58], [78].

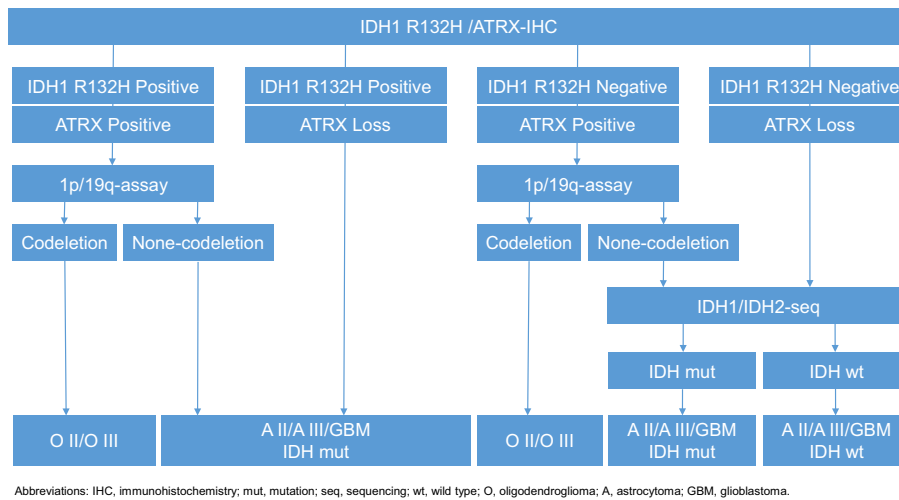


Fig. 1. Algorithm for the integrated diagnosis of astrocytomas, oligodendrogliomas and glioblastomas. Figure adapted from ref [57].

IDH2 sequencing (Fig. 1) [57]. Post-operative radiation therapy and chemotherapy should depend on the patients' clinical information, extent of resection, histology classification and molecular characteristics, and so on (Fig. 2). The assessment of IDH mutation, 1p and 19q codeletion, and MGMT promoter methylation status could be considered to establish a management algorithm for patients with anaplastic glioma and glioblastoma [58]. Additionally, the decision for specific treatments must consider several issues such as patient preference, tumor location, target volume of radiotherapy, and potential comorbidities that might increase the risk of toxicity from therapy.

Low grade gliomas (WHO II, LGG)

Although recent advances have been made in chemotherapy and radiation therapy for LGGs, surgical resection remains essential to its management. A growing body of literature supports the claim that a greater extent of resection leads to a significant survival benefit for LGGs [59–65]. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines for the management of low-grade infiltrative supratentorial astrocytoma/oligodendroglioma in adult patients

recommend maximum safe resection of tumor tissue, if possible, with the caveat that serial observation may be appropriate for selected patients [66]. Observation may be reasonable in low-risk LGG patients (≤40 years old and receiving gross total resection) [67] with minimal or no symptoms [68], receiving MRI every 3–6 months for 5 years and then least annually. However, even in the low-risk cohort, patients with astrocytoma histology were found to have had increased rate of recurrence and death. Patients receiving early radiotherapy may have a statistically significant improvement in progression-free survival, although overall survival is usually equivalent. A total RT dose of 50.4–54 Gy in fractions of 1.8 Gy represents the current standard of radiotherapy for LGGs [69,70]. Seizures are also more likely to be controlled in the early radiotherapy group [71]. According to several randomized clinical trials (RTOG 9802, EORTC 22033 and RTOG 0424), patients with high-risk LGGs (>40 years old or none receiving gross total resection) could benefit from radiotherapy plus concurrent and adjuvant chemotherapy (or only adjuvant chemotherapy) [72–75]. Although temozolomide has been proved to be more tolerable than procarbazine, lomustine (CCNU), and vincristine (PCV regimen), which justified the use of temozolomide in the early setting as an alternative to PCV [74], the

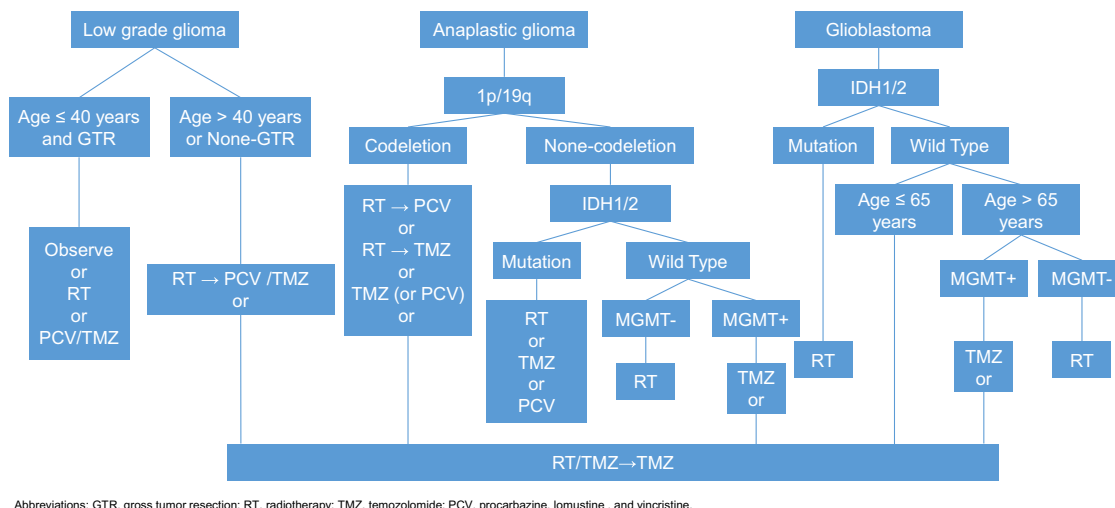


Fig. 2. Treatment approach for gliomas based on clinical and molecular information. Figure revised from refs [58], [66], [79].



benefits of TMZ should now be considered more carefully against its potentially adverse effects of hypermutation on the basis of the studies on paired gliomas with *IDH* mutations [76,77].

#### Anaplastic gliomas (WHO III, AG)

Anaplastic gliomas comprise three histological subtypes: anaplastic astrocytoma (AA), anaplastic oligodendroglioma (AO) and anaplastic oligoastrocytoma (AOA). Surgery by removing tumor mass and improving mass-related symptoms also allows the potential for functional improvement of the patients [55]. Standard therapy consists of adjuvant radiotherapy up to a total dose of 60 Gy after surgery [78]. Postoperative chemotherapy following initial surgery varies according to the histological type, molecular subtype and the clinical status of the patients. 1p/19q codeletion harbors the predictive value for the benefit from chemotherapy, in addition to characterize a prognostically more favorable subgroup of patients with anaplastic oligodendroglial tumors. Patients with 1p/19q-codeleted oligodendroglial tumors may benefit from radiotherapy plus PCV after surgery [79–81]. TMZ is widely considered as less toxic than PCV [14,18,81,82], and no difference in response rate or survival was identified [83]. The outcome of TMZ in anaplastic gliomas in several ongoing clinical trials is expected. CODEL trial was designed to address whether the addition of temozolomide to radiotherapy increased the survival of patients with codeleted tumors and answer the question whether progression-free survival of the combination of radiotherapy and temozolomide is not relevantly different from the combination of radiotherapy and PCV. Another phase III trial “CATNON” will show whether combined radiochemotherapy with temozolomide (concomitant and/or as an adjuvant maintenance treatment) is superior to radiotherapy alone [84]. In summary, 1p/19q codeleted AGs may have several therapeutic options varying in evidence-based recommendations: RT and adjuvant PCV, RT and adjuvant TMZ, RT plus concomitant and adjuvant TMZ, or chemotherapy only (TMZ or PCV) [79]. In a sub-study for anaplastic gliomas, MGMT promoter methylation was a predictive marker for response to alkylating chemotherapy in *IDH* wild-type tumors only and not in *IDH* mutated tumors [20,85]. On the other hand, patients with noncodeleted and nonmutated AO/AOA experienced no discernible benefit from the addition of PCV to RT. Combined radiochemotherapy has not been established as superior to RT only or chemotherapy only in newly diagnosed non-codeleted AGs [66,84,86,87]. The NCCN recommends treatment of newly diagnosed AAs by RT only followed by observation and chemotherapy at progression [66]. A retrospective study depicted that in patients with 1p/19q noncodeleted tumors with *IDH* mutations, those who were ATRX positive might have benefitted more than those who were negative from pre-RT PCV [88].

#### Glioblastoma (WHO IV, GBM)

The trial-EORTC 26981/NCIC CE3 was the first study to demonstrate unequivocally that addition of temozolomide to radiotherapy for the treatment of patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma significantly improved survival. Radiotherapy plus concomitant and adjuvant TMZ chemotherapy is the current standard of care for patients less than 70 years old with GBM [18,89]. Radiation therapy, usually dosed as 60 Gy in 30 fractions, has been the cornerstone of glioblastoma therapy for decades [90]. The radiotherapy volume often contains the T1-enhanced region plus a 2–3 cm safety margin on the T2 or FLAIR abnormality [91]. TMZ is administered at 75 mg/m<sup>2</sup> daily (7 days a week) during radiotherapy and for six maintenance cycles on 5 out of 28 days at 150–200 mg/m<sup>2</sup> as maintenance (adjuvant) treatment after the end of radiation. Several clinical trials and cohort studies have shown that MGMT promoter methylation is associated with prolonged progression-free and overall survival

in patients with glioblastoma receiving alkylating drug chemotherapy [19,89,92–95]. In 2012, two independent randomized trials in elderly patients with glioblastoma assessed radiotherapy alone versus temozolomide chemotherapy alone as initial treatment. Both temozolomide and hypofractionated radiotherapy should be considered as standard treatment options in elderly patients with glioblastoma. Subgroup analyses of both trials showed better outcome for chemotherapy in patients with *MGMT* promoter methylated tumors, but reduced survival in patients with unmethylated tumors [96,97]. On the basis of findings from the NOA-08 and Nordic trials, MGMT testing should be standard practice [21]. Recently, the CGGA project reported that patients with *IDH* wild-type glioblastoma who underwent RT + TMZ exhibited significantly longer survival times compared to the patients who were assigned to the RT alone treatment. However, among patients with *IDH* mutation tumors, the survival patterns of patients undergoing RT + TMZ or RT were comparable [98]. *IDH* mutations have been recognized as definitive diagnostic molecular markers of secondary glioblastoma, distinctive from *de novo* glioblastoma and more reliable and objective than clinical and/or pathological criteria [33]. These results strongly suggest that treatment strategies for elderly patients with glioblastoma should be individualized dependent on *IDH* and *MGMT* [58]. Two large-scale randomized trials have showed that patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma, when receiving bevacizumab in addition to temozolomide chemoradiotherapy, could benefit in progression-free survival, but not in overall survival [99,100].

#### Tumor recurrence

Standards of care for patients with recurrent glioma are not well defined and clinical decision making is often based on histology classification, previous treatment, age, Karnofsky performance score, molecular information and patterns of relapse. At tumor progression, second surgery becomes the potential option, which should typically be considered when patients have large but circumscribed lesions causing neurological deficits and when the interval between surgeries is more than 6 months. However, there are no prospective data available on the impact of repeat surgery on OS. Retrospective analyses also failed to identify surgery for recurrent disease as a significant prognostic factor for prolonged survival [101,102]. For recurrent patients who have already received radiation, hypofractionated radiotherapy (e.g., with 25–30 Gy in five fractions of 5 or 6 Gy, or with 35 Gy in ten 3.5 Gy fractions) is feasible if relapses are circumscribed and chemotherapy is contraindicated. Alkylating agent chemotherapy is the treatment of choice for most tumors previously untreated with chemotherapy that relapse after receiving radiotherapy. In NCCN guidelines, the antiangiogenic therapy with bevacizumab is also recommended in the management of progressive malignant gliomas. Although patients cannot get overall survival benefit from bevacizumab [103–105], bevacizumab is universally accepted because of evident symptom relief effects, for example, reducing cerebral edema [106]. Randomized trials in recurrent glioblastoma have failed to demonstrate the significant anti-tumor efficacy of epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) inhibition (e.g. erlotinib) or platelet-derived growth factor receptor inhibition (e.g. imatinib) [107,108].

#### Supportive care

Corticosteroids (usually dexamethasone 8–16 mg/day) are often prescribed to patients for control of tumor-associated edema and improving clinical symptoms. Steroids are not necessary in patients without increased intracranial pressure or in the absence of edema-associated neurological deficits. There is no need for prolonged steroid therapy after tumor resection or for prophylaxis during radiotherapy in asymptomatic patients. Rapid tapering and

discontinuation of corticosteroids is recommended in order to avoid toxicity associated with prolonged exposure to steroids, e.g. lymphopenia and risk of infection, osteoporosis and Cushing syndrome.

Anti-epileptic therapy is indicated in patients presenting with seizures. If no further seizure occurs after surgery and the tumor seems to be controlled by treatment, tapering of anticonvulsants should be attempted within the first weeks or months after surgery. After tumor resection, the indication for anti-epileptic therapy should be revisited only if seizures occur [109,110].

Patients with gliomas are at increased risk of thromboembolic events throughout the course of disease due to many reasons, including neurological deficits, steroid use, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and release of vasoactive molecules from glioma cells [111]. Prophylactic anticoagulation is not recommended; however, a low threshold for excluding deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary emboli is indicated when suspicious symptoms occur.

#### Response evaluation and follow-up

The Response Assessment in Neuro-Oncology (RANO) defines a set of criteria for assessing outcome in trials of adult gliomas [112,113], including specific guidelines for using tumor size and appearance on T2/FLAIR MRI sequences to define tumor response. The criteria take into account stability of corticosteroid dosing, neurological function, clinical status (Macdonald criteria) [114], and differentiation between new T2 or FLAIR abnormalities related to tumor spread in comparison with those attributable to radiation effects. MRI should be utilized to evaluate the efficacy of treatment or as surveillance imaging after completion of treatment at an interval of 3–6 months. Contrast enhancement and presumed tumor progression on imaging 4–8 weeks after the end of radiotherapy may be a reactive process following radiotherapy (pseudo-progression) [115] and should be re-evaluated 4 weeks later with a second MRI. Longer intervals might be considered for patients with lengthy disease control, notably young patients with 1p/19q-codeleted oligodendroglial tumors. Laboratory tests should also be indicated if the patient is receiving chemotherapy (blood counts), corticosteroids (glucose) or anti-epileptic drugs (blood count, liver function tests).

#### Note

The following electronic databases were searched: the Cochrane Library to date; Medline–Ovid (January 1966 to date); Medline–ProQuest; Medline–EIDL; Embase–Ovid (January 1990 to date); CancerNet; and Science Citation Index. We used specific and sensitive keywords, as well as combinations of keywords, and publications in any language of countries represented in the Task Force. The search was completed in June 2015.

The Panel covered all fields of expertise in neuro-oncology, i.e. neurosurgeons, neurologists, neuropathologists, neuroradiologists, radiation and medical oncologists and clinical trial experts. The scientific evidence of papers collected from the literature was evaluated and graded and recommendations were given accordingly. These are summarized in Table 2 with explanatory notes, and statements without grading were considered justified standard clinical practice by the expert authors and the CGCG faculty. The Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine Levels of Evidence and Grades of Recommendation (March 2009) are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 [116].

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#### Authors' contributions

Tao Jiang, Ying Mao, Wenbin Ma, Qing Mao, Yongping You and Xuejun Yang take responsibility for the integrity and the accuracy of the guideline.

**Table 2**  
Conclusion and recommendations.

	Level of evidence	Grade of recommendation
<b>General recommendations</b>		
Gliomas are diagnosed using morphological criteria according to WHO classification.	1a	A
Karnofsky performance score, neurological function, and age need to be considered in clinical decision making in neuro-oncology.	1b	A
Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can be used to detect the presence of tumor and guide managements such as biopsy, surgery and radiation.	2b	B
Maximal safe resection is the first option for all gliomas, while minimizing the postoperative morbidity.	2a	B
When surgery is not feasible, a biopsy should be performed to obtain a histological diagnosis.	4	C
MGMT promoter methylation, IDH mutations and 1p/19q codeletion are commonly determined depending on the histological and clinical contexts.	1b	A
<b>Low grade gliomas (WHO grade II)</b>		
Younger patients ( $\leq 40$ years of age) with gross total resection can be observed after surgery, but close follow-up is needed.	1b	B
For patients with high risk (age $> 40$ years or none receiving gross total resection), an adjuvant treatment is indicated at any time.	1b	B
Radiotherapy may be selected for high risk patients (age $> 40$ years or gross total resection not received).	1b	A
Chemotherapy is an option as initial treatment for patients with large residual tumors after surgery or unresectable tumors, especially when 1p/19q loss is present.	1b	B
<b>Anaplastic gliomas (WHO grade III)</b>		
Patients with 1p/19q co-deleted anaplastic oligodendroglioma (oligoastrocytoma) should receive chemotherapy with alkylating agents with or without radiotherapy.	1b	B
MGMT promoter methylation could be a predictive marker for response to alkylating chemotherapy in IDH wild-type anaplastic gliomas.	2b	B
Temozolomide chemotherapy is standard treatment at progression after surgery and radiotherapy.	1b	A
<b>Glioblastoma (WHO grade IV)</b>		
Radiotherapy combined with temozolomide remains the standard of care for newly diagnosed glioblastoma.	1b	A
In elderly patients ( $> 65$ years) with IDH wild-type and MGMT promoter methylation, temozolomide chemotherapy may be considered, while radiotherapy is the treatment of choice for patients with an unmethylated gene promoter.	1b	B
Bevacizumab ( $\pm$ irinotecan) is an option for the management of recurrent glioblastoma.	1b	B

**Table 3**  
Levels of evidence.

Level	Therapy/Prevention, etiology/Harm	Prognosis	Diagnosis
1a	SR (with homogeneity*) of RCTs	SR (with homogeneity*) of inception cohort studies; CDR† validated in different populations	SR (with homogeneity*) of level 1 diagnostic studies; CDR† with 1b studies from different clinical centers
1b	Individual RCT (with narrow confidence interval)	Individual inception cohort study with >80% follow-up; CDR† validated in a single population	Validating** cohort study with good††† reference standards; or CDR† tested within one clinical center
1c	All or none‡	All or none case-series	Absolute SpPins and SnNouts††
2a	SR (with homogeneity*) of cohort studies	SR (with homogeneity*) of either retrospective cohort studies or untreated control groups in RCTs	SR (with homogeneity*) of level >2 diagnostic studies
2b	Individual cohort study (including low quality RCT; e.g., <80% follow-up)	Retrospective cohort study or follow-up of untreated control patients in an RCT; derivation of CDR† or validated on split-sample§§§ only	Exploratory** cohort study with good††† reference standards; CDR† after derivation, or validated only on split-sample§§§ or databases
2c	“Outcomes” research; ecological studies	“Outcomes” Research	
3a	SR (with homogeneity*) of case–control studies		SR (with homogeneity*) of 3b and better studies
3b	Individual case–control study		Non-consecutive study; or without consistently applied reference standards
4	Case-series (and poor quality cohort and case–control studies§§)	Case-series (and poor quality prognostic cohort studies***)	Case–control study, poor or non-independent reference standard
5	Expert opinion without explicit critical appraisal, or based on physiology, bench research or “first principles”	Expert opinion without explicit critical appraisal, or based on physiology, bench research or “first principles”	Expert opinion without explicit critical appraisal, or based on physiology, bench research or “first principles”

\* Homogeneity means a systematic review (SR) that is free of worrisome variations (heterogeneity) in the directions and degrees of results between individual studies. Not all SRs with statistically significant heterogeneity need be worrisome, and not all worrisome heterogeneities need be statistically significant.

† Clinical decision rule. (Algorithms or scoring systems which lead to a prognostic estimation or a diagnostic category.)

‡ Met when all patients died before the treatment became available, but some now survive on it; or when some patients died before the treatment became available, but none now die on it.

§§ Poor quality cohort study: one that failed to clearly define comparison groups and/or failed to measure exposures and outcomes in the same (preferably blinded) objective way in both exposed and non-exposed individuals and/or failed to identify or appropriately control known confounders and/or failed to carry out a sufficiently long and complete follow up of patients. Poor quality case–control study: one that failed to clearly define comparison groups and/or failed to measure exposures and outcomes in the same (preferably blinded) objective way in both cases and controls and/or failed to identify or appropriately control known confounders.

§§§ Split sample validation is achieved by collecting all the information in a single tranche, then artificially dividing this into “derivation” and “validation” samples.

†† An “Absolute SpPin”: a diagnostic finding whose specificity is so high that a positive result rules in the diagnosis. An “Absolute SnNout”: a diagnostic finding whose sensitivity is so high that a negative result rules out the diagnosis.

††† Good reference standards are independent of the test, and applied blindly or objectively to all patients. Poor reference standards are haphazardly applied, but still independent of the test. Use of a non-independent reference standard (where the “test” is included in the “reference”, or where the “testing” affects the “reference”) implies a level 4 study.

\*\* Validating studies test the quality of a specific diagnostic test, based on prior evidence. An exploratory study collects information and trawls the data (for example, using a regression analysis) to find which factors are “significant.”

\*\*\* Poor quality prognostic cohort study: one in which sampling was biased in favor of patients who already had the target outcome, or the measurement of outcomes was accomplished in <80% of study patients, or outcomes were determined in an unblinded, non-objective way, or there was no correction for confounding factors. Table adapted from ref [116].

**Table 4**  
Grades of recommendation.

Grades	Description
A	Consistent level 1 studies
B	Consistent level 2 or 3 studies <b>or</b> extrapolations from level 1 studies
C	Level 4 studies <b>or</b> extrapolations from level 2 or 3 studies
D	Level 5 evidence <b>or</b> troublingly inconsistent or inconclusive studies of any level

Table adapted from ref [116].

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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