

## New developments

### Zeneca reports on new drugs at ECCO 8

Tomudex (ZD1694) is at least as effective as standard therapy for advanced colorectal cancer, but has a higher response rate, provides equivalent palliative effects and offers a more convenient administration schedule requiring less time in hospital. This was reported at the ECCO 8 Conference held in Paris (France) from October 29 to November 2. The report is by J Zaloberg *et al.* of the Australian Tomudex Colorectal Cancer Study Group who compared 439 patients with previously untreated colorectal cancer in a randomized phase III trial who were either given Tomudex ( $3 \text{ mg/m}^2$  i.v., 3 weekly) or the standard leucovorin ( $20 \text{ mg/m}^2$ ) plus 5-Auorouracil (5-FU) ( $425 \text{ mg/m}^2$ ) given 4–5 weekly. Although there was no statistical difference between these two treatment groups for time to progression and survival, the Tomudex-treated group had a statistically significant lower incidence of grade 3 and 4 leucopenia and mucositis.

Tomudex, a product of Zeneca Pharmaceuticals, is a direct and specific thymidylate synthase inhibitor. Further randomized studies are presently being performed. At the Paris meeting, A Harstrick and colleagues of the West German Cancer Center in Essen reported that Tomudex exhibits partial cross-resistance to 5-FU, especially in cell lines which were treated with protracted schedules of 5-FU. A combination of protracted infusion of 5-FU (24 h) and Tomudex appeared to be the most active combination. They propose that this might serve as a basis for the design of clinical trials.

Arimidex, an aromatase inhibitor produced by Zeneca, was reported at ECCO 8 to be as effective as megestrol acetate in the treatment of women with advanced breast cancer. Moreover, the adverse effects of a large weight gain often observed after megestrol acetate treatment is seen to a much less extent with Arimidex (reported by W Jonat *et al.*, International Study Group).