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Introduction

This special issue of the European Journal of Cancer deals with an extremely difficult task of providing guidelines and recommendations for the management of infection in leukaemic patients.

Over the last 30 years, the European scientific community has been at the forefront of this area of medicine and has established standards of care. However, infections remain frequent and life threatening particularly in the course of leukaemia. Any attempt to make significant progress in the survival of patients with cancer and mainly haematologic malignancy will rely on optimal complementarity and cooperation of specialists from various disciplines including infectious disease specialists.

The content of this special issue includes the most challenging area of bacterial and fungal infections in leukaemia with useful recommendations for the clinician at the bed side of the patient.

The results of this European initiative also stress the need to address the role of independent clinical research and academic research particularly as many of the infections described are difficult to treat but also to prevent or to diagnose.

However, this series of manuscripts also illustrate that there are still numerous challenges and opportunities ahead for clinical trialists in Europe as numerous questions are still unresolved despite tremendous efforts in the last decades and the significant progress that has been made in the last 10 years.

While the potential market for anti-infectious agents in patients with haematological malignancies is rather limited, there is a clear need for strong partnership between the aca-

demic scientific community and the pharmaceutical industry developing new agents as there is not much incentive to develop very expensive drugs in these circumstances.

Major efforts will also be needed to update regularly those recommendations and to improve the methodology of clinical research in infectious disease. Although the control and the management of bacterial infections have been practically solved, this is not the case for invasive fungal infections.

A special issue such as this one should also be useful for health care providers and governments bodies having to allocate funding and reimbursement within limited health care budgets.

European clinical researchers have been pioneers and should pursue their work of international cooperation promoting high quality clinical trials which will be beneficial both for the competitiveness of European research but mainly for all patients with haematological malignancies.

Conflict of interest statement

None declared.

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