

## *International Conference on Supportive Care in Oncology* *Introduction*

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THE FIRST ICSCO was held on 23–25 August 1988 in Brussels, Belgium, and was a great success. With over 250 physicians and allied health care professionals in attendance from around the world, the consensus of those attending was that the conference was of great value and that the scientific content was outstanding. The next meeting will be held in Baltimore (23–25 August 1989) and will explore the role of antiemetics, the psycho-pharmacology of pain control agents, the management of infection in the neutropenic patient, cytokines in intensive cancer chemotherapy, and other pertinent issues related to supportive care of the cancer patient. Although management approaches to the care of the cancer patient have advanced on many fronts, many therapeutic challenges still exist for the physician, the nurse, the pharmacist, other health care providers, and the patient as partners in providing quality health care. The meeting has been designed with these challenges in mind.

Cancer therapy has evolved, during the last decades, into a highly sophisticated approach. Successes have been spectacular but at a very serious price: physical toxicity and major burden to the psychological balance of the treated individuals. Training of highly specialized medical and para-medical staff has become a necessity to cope with these aspects. This is the reason why a new specialty has emerged: the science of supportive care, which encompasses all the aspects which help specific therapy of cancer and make it possible. Time has come to formally focus on these aspects and the ICSCO meetings are specifically planned to handle these expectations. The following papers are examples of a new approach to a total management of the cancer patients. They will hopefully serve as an incentive for a broad interest in all the areas which might contribute to effective support of the patient who is undergoing cancer therapy.

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