

# News

## Developmental Genetics of Childhood Cancer

The American Association for Cancer Research will hold a special conference on Development Genetics of Childhood Cancer on 8–11 February 1991 in San Diego, California, U.S.A. The conference aims to examine the specific group of malignancies that occur in children and the processes that appear to be critical in their origin. The conference chairman is Alfred G. Knudson Jr and further details can be obtained from the American Association for Cancer Research, Public Ledger Building, Suite 816, Sixth and Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, U.S.A. Tel (1) 215 440 9300, fax (1) 215 440 9313.

## Angiogenesis

An international symposium on Angiogenesis: Key Principles, Science, Technology and Medicine, will be held in St Gallen, Switzerland on 13–15 March 1991. Advances in basic sciences and medicine have led to a better understanding of the process of blood vessel formation in health and disease and this symposium aims to bring together work in medicine, molecular biology, cell biology, biochemistry and biotechnology. The symposium is supported by the European Association for Cancer Research and the American Cell Culture Society. Further information can be obtained from the Administrative Secretariat "Angio 91", Conference Manager, Haus 09 Kantonspital, CH-9007, St Gallen, Switzerland. Tel (41) 71 26 10 97.

## Neo-adjuvant Chemotherapy

The 3rd International Congress on Neo-adjuvant Chemotherapy will be held in Paris, France, on 6–9 February 1991. For further information, contact Prof. Cl. Jacquillat, 47 boulevard de l'Hôpital, 75651 Paris Cedex 13, France.

## Reducing the Risk of Cancer

The first learning package on cancer prevention aimed at a European audience has been produced by the Open University's Department of Health and Social Welfare. *Reducing the Risk of Cancers*\* discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the European Commission's colloquium "The prevention of cancers: spreading the message", held in Lisbon in February 1989, as part of the Europe Against Cancer year.

*Dying for a Smoke*, a video compilation of interviews with key conference speakers, highlights action required to reduce mortality rates from tobacco-related cancers. Tobacco manufacturers emphasise the positive contribution the industry makes to the economy; Michael Wood proposes an alternative view. He argues that the total costs to society of smoking (e.g. health care, lost working days, fires) outweigh the revenue from

taxation of tobacco products in most countries, and recommends research into the economic significance of tobacco. Priority for young people was another focus. Although the incidence of all cancers, and especially lung cancer, is very low in this age group, it is during early life that habits and attitudes towards smoking develop. Studies to investigate why young people smoke and strategies to discourage them from starting were urged.

Research into why men and women smoke, non-smoking policies at workplaces and government action to ban all advertising and promotion of tobacco products were also recommended. The resource pack includes teaching notes to accompany the video, and a book, *Reducing the Risk of Cancers*, which documents previously unpublished papers and reports of major debates from the colloquium.

## Leukaemia Research Fund Yearbook

The Leukaemia Research Fund supports studies of the causes and treatment of leukaemia and related diseases. The 1989 Year Book\* highlights the work of the Leukaemia Research Fund. The fund relies on voluntary donations and raised £8.4 million from donations and investment income in 1989. £21.1 million is now committed to research, which is 24% more than the previous year. Whereas the fund used to respond solely to requests for project grants, it now initiates new work—studies at the eight specialised Leukaemia Research Fund centres and units are examples. Here researchers investigate cellular and molecular biology, viruses, clinical epidemiology, childhood and adult leukaemia, remission, preleukaemia and molecular and cytogenetic haematology.

The academic programme of the Leukaemia Research Fund is seen as especially important. Its interdisciplinary links with other international research centres and interactions between scientists and clinicians complement the fund's research activities. In 1989, an international symposium on preleukaemia was held at the Royal College of Physicians in London, and discussed the role of growth factors and the regulation of gene expression in the transformation from preleukaemia to overt leukaemia. An international workshop on chronic myeloid leukaemia in Cape Cod, Florida, focused on the consequences of the *BCR/ABL* gene rearrangement. The annual guest lecture was by Professor Sir David Weatherall, University of Oxford, who spoke on the molecular basis for the clinical variability of genetic disease. The fund's grantholders and their staff also meet annually to present and discuss their research.

The Leukaemia Research Fund is also committed to patient care and treatment which includes a provision of grants for equipment. The fund also publishes free leaflets for patients and the public; some current examples include leukaemia in adults or in children, coping with childhood leukaemia in the family and bone marrow transplantation in the treatment of leukaemia.

Finally, although strictly not in 1989, the report highlights the 30 year involvement with the Leukaemia Research Fund of Gordon Piller, who retired as Director in March of 1990.

\**Reducing the Risk of Cancers*. 1989, £80.62. Available from the Information Officer, Department of Health and Social Welfare, Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, U.K.

\**Leukaemia Research Fund Year Book* 1989. Available from the Leukaemia Research Fund, 43 Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3JJ, U.K.

## Beating Cancer

In 1775, Sir Percival Potts noted a high frequency of cancer of the scrotum in chimney sweeps; in 1986 three pharmaceutical companies were granted product licences for the treatment of some leukaemias and solid tumours with interferons. These milestones flag the early history and some later developments in the study and treatment of cancer in "Beating Cancer"\*. A notable feature of this booklet, which is published by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), is that it is suitable for readers at many levels. The layout is attractive, with "stand-alone" boxes of information and good use of space and colour.

The introduction includes information on cellular differentiation, tumour invasion and metastases, carcinogens and carcinogenesis, and viruses and oncogenes. The section on cancer incidence includes the economic costs of cancer: when expressed as years of working-life lost, cancer has a worse record than the circulatory diseases and exceeds all other diseases. One of the pages on prevention shows an ABPI poster for the public on controlling cancer, which highlights the importance of not smoking, taking care with sunbathing and the possible influence of diet and alcohol use, and the importance of early treatment, breast examination and smear tests. The section on diagnosis

discusses detection by tumour markers, the binding of monoclonal antibodies to cancer cells and the various scanning and imaging techniques.

The largest part of the booklet is about the treatment of cancer—surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Not surprisingly, anticancer drugs are fully discussed from (history again) the use of potassium arsenite in two cases of leukaemia in 1865 to therapy with colony-stimulating factors and photoactivation at the end of the 1980s. The search for less toxic analogues has been prolific—about 800 000 compounds have been screened worldwide for anticancer activity, yet only about 40 have been used clinically. The "new" therapies that may prove useful in cancer include the colony-stimulating factors and immunotherapy with biological response modifiers. This section of the booklet is one of the most informative, with excellent graphics to help the reader wade through the immune system.

And what of the future? The use of vitamin D<sub>3</sub> analogues in leukaemia, antiganglionocide monoclonal antibodies in melanoma, antagonists of adhesins and their "lymph-node homing receptor", antagonists of laminin (a basement membrane glycoprotein to which malignant cells can bind), inhibition of angiogenesis and the blocking of receptor overproduction (e.g. receptors for growth factors) all hold promise, although these are still early days. Whatever the lay press exclaims, "miracle cures" remain elusive. To continue the militaristic analogy that ends the booklet, cancer may not yet be in retreat, but the enemy has reason to be worried.

\**Beating Cancer* by Dr Mike Hall. London, ABPI. 1990, 34 pp. Available from the ABPI, 12 Whitehall, London SW1A 2DY, U.K.



# The European School of Oncology

## 1991 FORTHCOMING EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

### 20th-22nd February

*Residential Course: Site: Bombay, India*

#### **Breast Cancer**

I. Mitra (IN), U. Veronesi (IT)

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### 22nd-23rd February

*Residential Course: Site: Vienna, Austria*

#### **Endocrine Tumours**

W. Waldhausl (AT), C. Dittrich (AT)

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### 24th-25th February

*Residential Course: Site: Vienna, Austria*

#### **Sexuality and Cancer**

L. Derogatis (US), M. Springer-Kremser (AT), C. Dittrich (AT)

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### 19th-21st March

*Seminar: Site: San Servolo Island, Venice, Italy*

#### **Oncogenes, Suppressor Genes and Growth Factors**

M. Sporn (US)

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### 9th-10th April

*Seminar: Site: San Servolo Island, Venice, Italy*

#### **Immunodiagnosis of Tumours**

S. von Kleist (DE)

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### 12th-14th April

*Residential Course: Site: Athens, Greece*

#### **Head & Neck Tumours**

G.B. Snow (NL)

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### 15th-19th April

*Residential Course: Site: New York, US*

#### **Breast Cancer**

D. Kinne (US), U. Veronesi (IT)

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### 15th-20th April

*Residential Course: Site: Barborka Centre, Poland*

#### **Clinical Radiobiology and Dose Fractionation**

B. Maciejewski (PL), S. Dische (GB)

### 21st-27th April

*Residential Course: Site: Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

#### **Medical Oncology**

H.M. Pinedo (NL)

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### 22nd-26th April

*Residential Course: Site: Rabat, Morocco*

#### **Head & Neck Tumours**

F. Demard (FR), P. Chauvel (FR)

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### 23rd-24th April

*Seminar: Site: San Servolo Island, Venice, Italy*

#### **Gastric Cancer**

U. Metzger (CH), M. Ogawa (JP)

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### 13th-17th May

*Residential Course: Site: Leningrad, SU*

#### **Bone Marrow Transplantation**

R. Mertelsmann (DE), R. Wagner (SU)

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### 27th-31st May

*Residential Course: Site: Orta San Giulio, Italy*

#### **Genito-Urinary Tract Tumours**

L. Denis (BE)

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### 3rd-4th June

*Residential Course: Site: Mexico DF, Mexico*

#### **Breast Cancer**

D. Kinne (US), U. Veronesi (IT)

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### 3rd-7th June

*Residential Course: Site: Orta San Giulio, Italy*

#### **Lymphomas**

F. Cavalli (CH), A. Lister (GB)

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### 6th-7th June

*Residential Course: Site: Sao Paulo, Brazil*

#### **Breast Cancer**

D. Kinne (US), U. Veronesi (IT)

For Residential Courses held in Italy and Switzerland, the registration fee is 600 ECU.

For Seminars held in Italy, the registration fee is 450 ECU.

For further information contact:

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