

This issue's topics



Stopping smoking cuts the risk.

Women diagnosed with breast cancer should be encouraged to stop smoking

This is the message from a study by Prochazka and colleagues in this issue. They examined, using data from the Swedish Cancer Registry (SCR), the risk of developing lung cancer following the diagnosis of breast cancer. They were particularly interested in whether post-surgical radiotherapy was associated with an increased risk. Data from approximately 141 000 women were examined and standardised incidence ratios and expected numbers of lung cancer cases were calculated based on the incidence rates from the SCR. Although there was a significantly reduced risk less than 5 years after a diagnosis of breast cancer (that was restricted to those aged > 60 years), there was a significantly increased risk after 5 years. Moreover, an increase for lung cancer on the same side as the breast cancer was also observed > 10 years after diagnosis. Worryingly, those birth cohorts with a higher smoking prevalence had a significantly higher risk and the authors speculate that this is related to a possible interaction between radiotherapy and smoking and suggest that women diagnosed with breast cancer should be encouraged to stop smoking. This type of study is particularly important given that there are an increasing number of breast cancer survivors.

Predicting tolerance to chemotherapy in older cancer patients

Cancer is predominantly a disease of the elderly. Since the older population is likely to increase in size in the future, it is important to determine how to predict those patients who will tolerate chemotherapy. In a prospective pilot study Extermann and colleagues have examined in this issue the predictors of tolerance to chemotherapy in 59 patients aged 70 years and over. 47% experienced grade 4 haematological toxicity and/or grade 3/4 non-haematological toxicity. They designed a factor known as MAX2 as a means to compare the known published toxicities of the regimens used. The MAX2 factor (as might be expected) was significantly associated with toxicity in univariate analyses as were several other factors including diastolic blood pressure, bone marrow invasion and lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) levels. Interestingly, these factors, with the exception of LDH, retained their significance after adjustment for the published toxicity. The authors urge caution in the interpretation of their data due to the small numbers involved, but state that "designing a composite predictive score to use in assessing the toxicity of multiple chemotherapy regimens appears to be a valid undertaking".

A dose-finding study of cisplatin and paclitaxel treatment of metastatic/irresectable oesophageal cancer patients

The prognosis for the majority of patients with squamous cell or adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus is poor as they tend to present with either systemic disease or relapse after surgery. The impact of chemotherapy in these patients is unclear. Polee and colleagues report in this issue a dose-finding study of weekly fixed dosed cisplatin (70 mg/m²) and escalated paclitaxel (from 80 to 110 mg/m²). Six administrations were given on days 1, 8, 15, 29, 36 and 43 to 24 patients with metastatic/irresectable oesophageal cancer. 19/24 (79%) received all 6 administrations. All patients were eligible for toxicity and the dose-limiting toxicity was observed at 110 mg/m² and was gastrointestinal. A response rate of 50% (11 of 22 eligible patients) was obtained. The authors state that any diarrhoea should be carefully monitored, as toxicities of grades 3 and 4 were observed in 4 (17%) of the patients. They conclude that the "response rate of this dose-dense schedule seems encouraging" and "further evaluation of this regimen as an induction treatment for resectable or locoregionally advanced oesophageal cancer and other tumour types is warranted".

Forthcoming papers

Editorial Comment

Editorial comment on "Frequent 3p allele loss and epigenetic inactivation of the RASSF1A tumour suppressor gene from region 3p21.3 in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma" by Hogg and colleagues
M.W.M. Van den Brekel, A.J.M. Balm.

Reviews

Second international consensus on the methodology and criteria of evaluation of angiogenesis quantification in solid human tumours
P.B. Vermeulen, G. Gasparani, S.B. Fox *et al.*

Combined classical and molecular cytogenetic analysis of cancer
M.R. Teixeira

Original papers

Clinical

Frequent 3p allele loss and epigenetic inactivation of the RASSF1A tumour suppressor gene from region 3p21.3 in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma
R.P. Hogg, S. Honorio, A. Martinez *et al.*

Progression to detrusor-muscle invasion in bladder carcinoma is associated with polysomy of chromosomes 1 and 8 in recurrent pTa/pT1 tumours
A.D. Watters, J.J. Going, K.M. Grigor, J.M.S. Bartlett

Differential expression of the suppressor PML and the PML-modulator CBP and BAX in human nasopharyngeal carcinoma
J.Y.H. Chan, C.L. Meng, K.F. To *et al.*

Intraoperative radiotherapy given as a boost after breast-conserving therapy
R. Reitsamer, F. Peintinger, F. Sedlmayer *et al.*

The development and utilisation of the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Group item bank
S. Vachalec, A. Bottomley, K. Bjordal *et al.*

Phase I and pharmacological study of daily oral administration of perifosine (D-21266) in patients with advanced solid tumours
M. Crul, H. Rosing, G.J. de Klerk *et al.*

Does the method of detection of breast cancer affect subsequent psychiatric morbidity
C.C. Burgess, A.J. Ramirez, M.A. Richards, H.W.W. Potts

Vinorelbine in androgen-independent prostatic carcinoma-a phase II study
R. Morant, S.-F. Hsu Schmitz, J. Bernhard *et al.*

Paediatric

Announcement

Fertility and progeny
A.B. Thomson, H.O.D. Critchley, W.H.B. Wallace

Paediatric Update

Fertility and pregnancy outcome after treatment for cancer during childhood and adolescence
D.M. Green

Epidemiology and Cancer Prevention

Use of hair colouring products and breast cancer risk: a case control study in Connecticut
T. Zheng, T.R. Holford, S.T. Mayne *et al.*

Experimental

Sequence-dependent synergism between the new generation platinum agent ZD0473 and paclitaxel in cisplatin-sensitive and -resistant human ovarian carcinoma cell lines
P. Rogers, F.E. Boxall, C.P. Allott *et al.*

Structure-activity relationship of indomethacin analogues for MRP-1, COX-1 and COX-2 inhibition: identification of novel chemotherapeutic drug resistance modulators
S. Touhey, R O'Connor, S. Plunkett *et al.*

Letters

Letter to the Editor
M. Rosen, A. Edberg

Reply

F. Levi, F. Lucchini, E. Negri