

This issue's topics



**Targeted therapy unlikely
to be active in SCLC**

'Magic bullet' unlikely to be active in SCLC

STI571—a new targeted therapy—has been shown to be active in gastrointestinal stromal tumours (GISTs), particularly those with activating mutations in the *c-kit* exon 11 region. The drug selectively inhibits the activity of various tyrosine kinases including c-KIT. Burger and colleagues have investigated in this issue the mutation status of the *c-kit* exon 11 in 26 samples taken from SCLC patients. Although c-KIT was expressed in 64% of the tissues examined, no activating mutations were found in any of the samples. The authors suggest that “in analogy to GISTs, their results could imply that SCLC patients would not benefit from treatment with STI571”.

Amifostine—potential protector of normal tissues?

Combined therapies that improve selectivity are increasingly being investigated as they may lead to improved therapeutic outcomes. Unfortunately, they are also associated with an increased toxicity in normal tissues. Thus, agents such as amifostine that may be able to act selectively as modulators of toxicity in normal tissues—without affecting the cytotoxic effects of the various agents—are of interest. Amifostine is a pro-drug that is dephosphorylated by membrane-bound alkaline phosphatase (AP) to a free thiol metabolite, WR1065, that is responsible for its protective effects. In this issue, Pauwels and colleagues investigated the *in vitro* effects of gemcitabine and radiation treatment and whether amifostine protected cells from these effects. Gemcitabine increased the radiosensitivity of several cell lines (representing epithelial tumours) in a concentration- and cell line-dependent manner. Amifostine and AP were able to negate the radiosensitive effects of gemcitabine. If this were to occur selectively in normal tissues *in vivo* then amifostine may be important agent to minimise toxicity and optimise combined therapies.

Factors influencing the outcome of cancer patients referred to ICUs

Maschmeyer and colleagues studied the outcome of 189 consecutive patients who were referred as emergencies to four intensive care units (ICUs) in Germany over a 2-year period. There were several reasons for referral including various infections. In their retrospective analysis, no single risk factor predicted death, although their data suggested some subgroups were likely to have a poorer outcome such as those with invasive fungal infections requiring vasopressor support and mechanical ventilation. The authors concluded that a prospective study is needed to confirm the usefulness of this approach. They state that “cancer patients should not be excluded from referral to an ICU in an emergency solely due to their underlying malignant disease or a single unfavourable prognostic factor”.

Forthcoming papers

Editorial Comment

Editorial: Histological measurement of tumour angiogenesis

J.J. Boyle

Reviews

The use of GnRH agonists in early and advanced breast cancer in pre- and perimenopausal women

J.F.R. Robertson, R.W. Blamey

Geriatric oncology: a clinical approach to the older patient with cancer

L. Repetto, A. Venturino, L. Frattino, *et al.*

Original Papers

Clinical

Effect of low dose Tamoxifen on the normal breast tissue of premenopausal women

G.R. de Lima, G. Facina, J.Y. Shida, *et al.*

Quantification of angiogenesis as a prognostic marker in human carcinomas: a critical evaluation of histopathological methods for estimation of vascular density

B.V. Offersen, M. Borre, J. Overgaard

Immunoassays of urokinase (uPA) and its type-1 inhibitor (PAI-1) in detergent extracts of breast cancer tissue

A.N. Pedersen, H.T. Mouridsen, D.Y. Tenney, N. Brunner

Expression of multidrug resistance proteins, P-gp, MRP1 and LRP, in soft tissue sarcomas analysed according to their histological type and grade

R. Komdeur, B.E.C. Plaat, W.T.A. van der Graaf, *et al.*

Phase I and pharmacokinetic study of continuous twice weekly intravenous administration of Cilengitide (EMD 121974), a novel inhibitor of the integrins $\alpha v \beta 3$ and $\alpha v \beta 5$ in patients with advanced solid tumours

F.A.L.M. Eskens, H. Dumez, Hoekstra, *et al.*

Rapid intravenous administration of granisetron prior to chemotherapy is not arrhythmogenic: results of a pilot study

M. Aapro, J.P. Bourke

Can patient, treatment, and pathology-related characteristics explain the high local recurrence rate following breast-conserving therapy in young patients?

C. Vrieling, L. Collette, A. Fourquet, *et al.*

Paediatric

Population-based survival after childhood lymphoblastic leukaemia in time intervals defined according to clinical trials: 1979–1998

G. Pastore, S. Viscomi, G.L. Gerov, *et al.*

Epidemiology and Cancer Prevention

Increased incidence of renal parenchymal carcinoma in the northern and Yorkshire region of England, 1978–1997

R. Tate, R. Iddenden, P. Harnden, *et al.*

A randomised population-based intervention to examine the effects of the ultraviolet index on tanning behaviour

R. Branstrom, Y. Brandberg, H. Ullen

Experimental

Chromosomal imbalances associated with acquired resistance to fluoropyrimidines in human colorectal cancer cells

S. Hidaka, T. Yasutake, M. Fukushima, *et al.*

The plasminogen activator and matrix metalloproteinase systems in colorectal cancer: relationship to tumour pathology

E.A. Baker, D.J. Leaper

A proteome study of secreted prostatic factors affecting osteoblastic activity: identification and characterisation of cyclophilin A

H. Andersen, O.N. Jensen, E.F. Eriksen

Gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase catalyses the extracellular detoxification of cisplatin in a human cell line derived from the proximal convoluted tubule of the kidney

A. Paolicchi, M. Sotiropoulou, P. Perego, *et al.*

Induction of 5 α -reductase type II mRNA transcription in primary cultured prostate epithelial cells by a soluble factor produced by primary cultured prostate fibroblast cells

C.W. Bayne, M. Ross, N.F. Inglis

Phenoxodiol, a novel isoflavone derivative, inhibits DMBA-induced mammary carcinogenesis in female Sprague–Dawley rats

A.I. Constantinou, R. Mehta, A. Husband

Blood glutathione as a surrogate marker of cancer tissue glutathione S-transferase activity in non-small cell lung cancer and squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck

E. Ferruzzi, R. Franceschini, G. Cazzolato, *et al.*