



Letter

Dear Sir,

Van Cutsem and colleagues recommend that 5-fluorouracil (FU) and folinic acid (FA) in either the weekly 'Roswell Park' or the 4-weekly 'Mayo' regimen should be standard chemotherapy for colon cancer [1]. However, although FUFA is undoubtedly the current standard chemotherapy, there is no good evidence to support the recommended regimens. The largest reported study establishing survival benefits from FUFA is the International Multicentre Pooled Analysis of Colorectal Cancer Trials (IMPACT) study [2], which used the 'Machover' regimen of 370 mg/m² of FU—which is less toxic than the 425 mg/m² of FU used in the Mayo regimen. The dose of folinic acid is higher in the Machover regimen, 200 mg/m² compared with 20 mg/m², but the large QUASAR (Quick and Simple and Reliable) study has demonstrated, reliably, that the dose of folinic acid is unimportant [3]. Moreover, the QUASAR study also strongly suggests that the once weekly schedule of FUFA, using 370 mg/m² of FU, is just as effective as the 5-day, 4-weekly Machover schedule, but with much less toxicity [4].

Thus, unless direct randomised comparisons show otherwise, the once weekly regimen (370 mg/m² FU plus 20 mg/m² of FA) used in QUASAR should be seen as standard chemotherapy—as it has become in the UK.

References

1. Van Cutsem E, Dicato M, Wils J, *et al.* Adjuvant treatment of colorectal cancer (current expert opinion derived from the Third International Conference: Perspectives in Colorectal Cancer, Dublin 2001). *Eur J Cancer* 2002, **38**, 1429–1436.
2. International Multicentre Pooled Analysis of Colorectal Cancer Trials (IMPACT) Investigators. Efficacy of adjuvant fluorouracil and folinic acid in colon cancer. *Lancet* 1995, **345**, 939–944.
3. QUASAR Collaborative Group. Comparison of fluorouracil with additional levamisole, higher-dose folinic acid, or both, as adjuvant chemotherapy for colorectal cancer: a randomised trial. *Lancet* 2000, **355**, 1588–1596.
4. Kerr DJ, Gray R, McConkey CC, Barnwell J. Adjuvant chemotherapy with 5-fluorouracil, L-folinic acid and levamisole for patients with colorectal cancer: non-randomised comparison of weekly versus 4-weekly schedules. *Ann Oncol* 2000, **11**, 947–955.

Professor Richard Gray
Director—Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit
E-mail address: r.gray@bham.ac.uk