

## This issue's topics



Cutting the risk of death  
in rectal cancer patients

### Better management of rectal cancer in The Netherlands

Patients with rectal cancer aged less than 75 years showed significant improvements in survival over the last 2 decades, a study reports in this issue. Martijn and colleagues examined data from 3635 patients diagnosed in South-East Netherlands from 1980 to 2000. They observed a shift in treatment from surgery alone to a combination of surgery and radiotherapy and also a shift from postoperative to preoperative radiotherapy. Older patients (aged 75 years and over) were less likely to receive radiotherapy and no survival benefit was observed in this group. The authors speculate that the improving survival observed in those aged less than 75 years could be due to the shift from postoperative to preoperative radiotherapy, the development of total mesorectal excision and the specialisation of surgeons in this field.

### Imatinib mesylate in GISTs and soft-tissue sarcomas

Verweij and colleagues report in this issue that imatinib mesylate is active in KIT-positive gastrointestinal stromal tumours (GIST), but not in 'other soft-tissue sarcomas' (STS) that are unselected for a molecular target. They examined the response rate and time to progression (TTP) of 27 GIST patients and 24 patients with 'other STS', both groups having advanced or metastatic disease, who were given imatinib mesylate (400 mg twice daily). In the GIST patients, 4% experienced complete remission and 67% partial remission whilst there were no objective responses in the 'other STS' patient group. 73% of the GIST patients were progression-free at 1 year. The median TTP in the 'other STS' group was 58 days. Toxicity was mild to moderate and no patient was taken off the study due to toxicity. The authors conclude that this dose of imatinib mesylate is active in KIT-positive GIST patients, but is unlikely to benefit patients with 'other STS' that are unselected for a molecular target. In a related paper, Stroobants and colleagues have compared and contrasted the response of patients to imatinib mesylate treatment as determined by [<sup>18</sup>F]-fluorodeoxyglucose-positron emission tomography (FDG-PET) or computerised tomography (CT) scan in 21 patients with soft-tissue sarcomas (17 gastrointestinal stromal tumours). They found that "FDG-PET was an early and sensitive method to evaluate an early response to imatinib mesylate treatment". Dr. Demetri discusses these two papers in an accompanying Editorial.

### Cancer of an unknown primary—a review

Pavlidis and colleagues review in this issue the diagnostic and therapeutic management of cancers of an unknown primary. They examine the clinicopathological features of this group of heterogeneous cancers that represent approximately 3% of all malignancies. The epidemiology, pathology, imaging, molecular diagnostics and treatment strategies of these cancers are also discussed. Favourable subsets of patients have been identified that respond to treatment and the authors propose that "the identification and treatment of these patients is of paramount importance".

## Forthcoming papers

### Editorial Comments

Morbidity from lymphoedema following treatment of primary breast cancer

R.W. Blamey

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy for locally advanced cervical cancer

E. Timotheadou, M.E. Gore

### Current Perspective

The role of chemotherapy in brain metastases

M.J. van den Bent

### Reviews

Nasopharyngeal carcinomas: an update

S. Jean-Philippe, B. Pierre, A. Dan *et al.*

Why and how to study the fate of cancer survivors: observations for the clinic and the research laboratory

P. Ganz

Mismatch repair and response to DNA-damaging antitumour therapies

M. Bignami, I. Casorelli P. Karan

### Original Papers

#### Clinical

Incidence of clinically significant lymphoedema as a complication following surgery for primary operable breast cancer

R.S. Rampaul, K. Mullinger, R.D. Macmillan *et al.*

Is physical function a more appropriate measure than volume excess in the assessment of breast cancer-related lymphoedema (BCRL)?

S.J. Pain, S.L. Vowler, A.D. Purushotham

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy for locally advanced cervical cancer: a systematic review and meta-analysis of individual patient data from 21 randomised trials

C.M. Diaz-Montero, B.W. McIntyre

Role of imprint cytology in the intra-operative evaluation of sentinel lymph nodes for malignant melanoma

M. Hocevar, M. Bracko, A. Pogacnik *et al.*

Fatigue in long term survivors of Hodgkin's lymphoma—a report from the German Hodgkin Lymphoma Study Group (GHSG)

J.U. Ruffer, H. Flechtner, P. Tralls *et al.*

Interobserver variability between general and expert pathologists against histopathological assessment of large-core needle and open biopsy of non-palpable breast lesions

H.M. Verkooijen, J.L. Peterse, M.E.I. Schipper *et al.*

Different outcome of surgery and radiotherapy in early-stage breast cancer patients

J.A. van der Hage, H. Putter, J. Bonnema *et al.*

Frequent methylation of *p16INK4A* and *p14ARF* genes implicated in evolution of chronic myeloid leukaemia from its chronic phase to acceleration

E. Nagy, Z. Beck, A. Kiss *et al.*

#### **Paediatric**

Familial hepatoblastoma and *APC* gene mutation

T.D. Pritchard, R. Davidson, R. Grundy *et al.*

#### **Epidemiology and Cancer Prevention**

The Norwegian founder mutations in *BRCA1*: high penetrance confirmed in incident cancer series and differences in risk of ovarian cancer

K. Heimdal, L. Maehle, J. Apold *et al.*

Differences in colorectal cancer survival between European and US populations: the importance of sub-site and morphology

G. Gatta, L. Ciccolallo, R. Capocaccia, M.P. Coleman *et al.*

Medical and non-medical determinants of prostate cancer management: a population-based study

E. Bauvin, M. Soulie, F. Menegoz *et al.*

Cancer incidence and mortality in Portugal

P.S. Pinheiro, J.E. Tyczynski, F. Bray *et al.*

#### **Experimental**

Heparanase-1 gene expression in normal, hyperplastic and neoplastic prostatic tissue

S. Stadlman, P.L. Moser, J. Pollheimer *et al.*

Studies with cytotoxic agents suggest that apoptosis is not a major determinant of clonogenic death in neuroblastoma cells

J. Russell, C. Clifton Ling

Superior antitumour activity of S-1 in tumours with high dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase activity

H. Fujiwara, M. Terashima, T. Irinoda *et al.*

Acquisition of anoikis resistance in human osteosarcoma cells

C.M. Diaz-Montero, B.W. McIntyre