This issue's topics

Letrozole—the next rung on the therapeutic ladder?

Letrozole superior to anastrozole in postmenopausal women with advanced breast cancer
Letrozole treatment resulted in a significantly higher overall response rate (ORR) than anastrozole when given to postmenopausal women with advanced breast cancer who had failed previous anti-oestrogen therapy, a study reports in this issue. Rose and colleagues compared data from a randomised, multicentre, open-label phase IIIb/IV trial including 713 patients (356 in the letrozole arm and 357 in the anastrozole arm). Although there were no differences between the two treatment arms in the primary endpoint, time to progression, letrozole was significantly superior than anastrozole in terms of the ORR (19.1% compared with 12.3%; $P = 0.013$). Both agents were well tolerated. "These results support previous data documenting the greater aromatase-inhibiting activity of letrozole and indicate that advanced breast cancer is more responsive to letrozole than to anastrozole as second-line endocrine therapy," they said.

Outpatient treatment with S-1 and cisplatin for metastatic gastric cancer
Approximately 90% of metastatic gastric cancer patients given 20 mg/m^2 of cisplatin intravenously together with the oral drug S-1 could be treated in the outpatient setting, a phase I dose-escalation study reports in this issue. Hyodo and colleagues administered S-1 over 2 weeks at a fixed dose of 70 mg/m^2/day and cisplatin on days 1 and 8 at doses of 10, 15 and 20 mg/m^2. Cycles were repeated every 3 weeks. A recommended dose of 20 mg/m^2 was set for the combined treatment. An overall response rate of 61% was observed in 18 evaluable patients. Chemo-naïve patients ($n = 9$) showed an even higher response rate of 78%. The authors propose "A randomised phase II study comparing this combination with S-1 alone in chemo-naïve patients is warranted".

Radiotherapy dose associated with increased risk of melanoma after childhood cancer
The risk of melanoma after childhood cancer increased after local doses of >15 Gy, Guerin and colleagues report in this issue. The authors studied two cohorts of patients; 4401 3-year survivors of childhood cancer and 25 120 patients younger than 20 years of age at their first malignant neoplasm (FMN). 16 patients (6 in the first cohort and 10 in the second) developed melanoma as a second malignant neoplasm (SMN) and these patients were matched to 3–5 controls from the same cohorts. Radiotherapy >15 Gy was associated with an Odds Ratio (OR) of 13 (95% Confidence Interval (CI) 0.94–174). An increased risk for children treated for a gonadal tumour was also observed (OR 8.7; 95% CI 0.9–86). "Radiotherapy may contribute to an increased risk of melanoma as a SMN, but only at very high doses of low linear energy transfer radiation," they said.

Forthcoming papers

Editorial Comments
A journey through cancer—parental views then and now
A Cooper
Neoadjuvant chemotherapy for locally advanced cervical cancer
E Timotheadou, ME Gore

Reviews
Clinical outcome of breast cancer patients with liver alone metastases in the anthracycline-taxane era: a retrospective analysis of two prospective, randomised metastatic breast cancer trials
G Atalay, L Biganzoli, F Renard, *et al.*
Drug resistance reversal - are we getting closer?
RD Baird, SB Kaye

Original Papers

Clinical
Neoadjuvant chemotherapy for locally advanced cervical cancer: a systematic review and meta-analysis of individual patient data from 21 randomised trials
Tierney J
Size of invasive breast cancer and risk of local recurrence after breast-conserving surgery
KS Asgeirsson, SJ McCulley, SE Pinder, RD Macmillan

0959-8049/$ - see front matter
doi:10.1016/j.ejca.2003.08.012

Adverse impact of bone marrow transplantation on quality of life in acute myeloid leukaemia patients: analysis of the UK Medical Research Council AML 10 trial
M Watson, G Harrison, K Wheatley, *et al*.
Guideline adherence and the effects of a quality programme, a breast cancer guideline study
PB Ottevanger, PHM De Mulder, RPTM Grol, *et al*.
Invariant p53 immunostaining in primary and recurrent breast cancer
SM Poelman, R Heimann, GF Fleming, *et al*.
Are carcinomas of the cardia oesophageal or gastric adenocarcinomas?
A Driessen, P Dvan Raemdonck, de Leyn, *et al*.
Overexpression of c-erbB-2 is related to higher expression of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and constitutes an independent prognostic factor in primary node-positive breast cancer after adjuvant systemic treatment
B Linderholm, J Andersson, B Lindh, *et al*.

Paediatric
Immunity against vaccine-preventable potentially neurotropic diseases in children treated for malignant brain tumours with HIT-91 chemo- and radiotherapy
E Schuller, E Forster-Waldl, I Slavc, W Maurer

Epidemiology and Cancer Prevention
Cancer incidence and mortality in Portugal
PS Pinheiro, JE Tyczynski, F Bray, *et al*.
Serum enterolactone and risk of breast cancer in women with palpable cysts
F Boccardo, G Lunardi, P Guglielmini, *et al*.
Trends in incidence of and mortality from cancer in The Netherlands in the period 1989–1998
S Siesling, JAAM van Dijck, O Visser, JWWW Coebergh

Experimental
Allelic imbalance at loci containing *FGFR*, *FGF*, *c-MET* and *HGF* candidate genes in non-small cell lung cancer sub-types, implication for progression
M Beau-Faller, MP Gaub, A Schneider, *et al*.
Mechanistic and anti-proliferative studies of two novel biologically active bis-benzimidazoles
A Seaton, J Mann, A Baron, *et al*.
Genetic analysis of the *LKB1*/*STK11* gene in heptocellular carcinomas
JK Chang, GC Yong, J Young Park, *et al*.
Uptake of 5-FU in peritoneal metastases in relation to mode of administration and surgical tumour reduction: an autoradiographic study in the rat
H Mahteme, B. Larsson, A Sundn, *et al*.
In vitro cytoprotective activity of squalene on a bone marrow versus neuroblastoma model of cisplatin-induced toxicity: implications in cancer chemotherapy
B Das, H Yeger, MH Freedman, *et al*.