

Patients With Pancreatic Cancer Need New Treatment Approaches

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Attending selected medical and nursing conferences is part of keeping up to date with changes in clinical practice. One of my favorite meetings to attend is the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) annual conference, which includes updates to various NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines and offers an

excellent 1-day advanced practice nursing (APN) program the day before the conference. It doesn't hurt that the meeting is held in sunny Hollywood, Florida, or that attendees of the APN meeting who register early receive waived registration fees for the NCCN conference!

Some of the highlights of the NCCN annual conference include several discussion forums that feature experts from various fields in a roundtable setting. Sam Donaldson usually moderates the opening roundtable discussion. The topic of the 2010 opening discussion was end-of-life issues. The panelists included physician experts, Olympic gold medalist skater (and two-time cancer survivor) Scott Hamilton, and Kayce Freed Jennings, the spouse of Peter Jennings (the news anchor who recently died of lung cancer), among others. Jai Pausch, the spouse of Randy Pausch (college professor and author of the phenomenally popular book, *The Last Lecture*), was also included in the panel, talking about her husband's fight with pancreatic cancer. I was particularly moved by her comments as she revealed details of the struggles her husband faced with this often fatal disease, and how the word "cancer" has now become one of the "scary" words in her vocabulary. The 2011 discussion will focus on the challenges faced by

caregivers. I encourage you to attend.

The number of patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer has essentially not changed, with approximately 36,800 people dying of this disease in 2010 (Jemal, Siegel, Xu, & Ward, 2010). It is the fourth most common cause of cancer-related death for men in the US. And although specific risk factors have been determined to increase the chance of developing pancreatic cancer (cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption), patients with a genetic predisposition can also develop the disease. Patients can present with a variety of symptoms that may be nonspecific, including jaundice and weight loss, yet no early warning signs for pancreatic cancer have been determined (Moss & Lee, 2010). Therefore, patients are often diagnosed with metastatic disease and most demonstrate few sustained responses to therapy (Yachida et al., 2010).

Although patients may receive surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy, our treatment strategies are limited. Gemcitabine has remained the standard of care for pancreatic cancer since its approval by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1996. New strategies are needed, as many patients progress on gemcitabine and could benefit from second-line therapies (Gounaris, Zaki, & Corrie, 2010). Ongoing research is determining the effects of targeted therapies, vaccine trials, and novel treatment approaches.

As I write this, several good friends of mine are struggling with pancreatic cancer and the lack of efficacious treatment strategies for this tumor type. Pancreatic cancer carries an often dismal prognosis. I look forward to significant improvement in pancreatic cancer screening and the development of optimal therapies for this disease.

This issue of the *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology* (JAdPrO) addresses predictive genetic testing for cancer susceptibility by Maureen Swiderski, and Angela Falco and Ellen Sullivan provide a thorough review of multiple

myeloma. Our biomarker series continues with a review by Ingrid Bowser and Kristan Rheinheimer on the role of markers in prostate cancer. *Prescriber's Corner* highlights a review of olanzapine, an adjunctive agent in the treatment of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Laura Zitella shares several websites helpful in determining prognosis in the treatment of patients with lymphoma in *Tools & Technology*, and *Practice Matters* addresses the impact of Risk, Evaluation, and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) on practice in a thoughtful discussion by Wendy Vogel and Marilyn Haas. In *Grand Rounds*, Beth Faiman discusses the importance of medication self-management and the role of advanced practitioners, and in our *Translating Research Into Practice* feature Karen Oishi and Terri Armstrong discuss different aspects of a paper on the role of epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) inhibitor agents in the treatment of patients with lung cancer.

We hope that the topics in this issue help you, the advanced practitioner, in the care of your oncology patients. We encourage you to let us know about additional issues and topics you would find of interest and subjects you'd like to see addressed in this journal. And as always, we invite potential authors to consider publishing your work in *JAdPrO*!

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