



Advances in Chemoradiation for Head and Cancer and the Integration of Targeted Biologic Therapies

The first speaker, sponsored by MGI Pharma at the OA annual meeting was David I. Rosenthal, MD, Associate Professor and Director of Head and Neck Translational Research, Department of Radiation Oncology, MD Anderson. His enlightening presentation was entitled, "Advances in Chemoradiation for Head and Cancer and the Integration of Targeted Biologic Therapies."

Dr. Rosenthal discussed head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC), including the demographics, risk factors, incidence and stage distribution. He reviewed treatment options to include RT alone vs. chemoRT. The data indicates that chemoRT is superior. Members asked several questions about the specific drug choices and dose-schedules for concurrent chemoradiation. Also discussed was the fact that the acute and chronic toxicities of chemoRT are substantial, and the only approved agents for use in treating Xerostomia are Salagen Tablets (pilocarpine) and amifostine. Several questions were asked about the protocols and safety profiles when these drugs are prescribed concurrently. Dr. Rosenthal then focused on a review of the role of the EGF-receptor and its inhibition as a promising new strategy to improve cancer control, and perhaps, to limit toxicity.

Issues Regarding the Ovarian Cancer Patient

In one of the small focus groups, also sponsored by MGI Pharma, the speaker was Julian Schink, MD, Professor and Vice Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Schink presented three distinct issues regarding the ovarian cancer patient: 1) The incidence and genetic links associated with ovarian cancer, and how this information can be used to prevent ovarian cancer in patients with BRCA-1, 2) The value and current techniques of surgical debulking, and 3) The possible applications of consolidation therapy (prescribing Hexalen Capsules, altretamine) when treating advanced ovarian cancer.

Dr. Schink referenced the SWOG-9326 data by Rothenberg, M, (Vanderbilt University Med Center), et al. *Gynecol Oncol.* 2001; 82:317-322. These findings reported that six months of treatment with altretamine capsules immediately after first line therapy significantly increased the two-year survival rate to 75% for the group as a whole. Furthermore, for women with optimally debulked ovarian cancer entered on this SWOG consolidation trial, the five-year survival exceeded 60%.

Feedback by both speakers was extremely complimentary of the OA members. Both Drs. Schink and Rosenthal indicated that they enjoyed the sincere interest of the attendees, as evidenced by the number of questions asked of them during their presentations.

GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

Dr. Joseph DiBenedetto, Jr., Medical Director along with Joe Lewarski, the Chief Operating Officer spoke to the members of Oncology Associates on the future of the clinical practice of oncology as well as the future of Oncology Associates.

An interesting discussion was held regarding the proposed reform of the current Medicare reimbursement system for drug and drug administration services. The members also discussed the ancillary services that Oncology Associates provides, specifically the member newsletter, its format, its information given, its utilization and suggestions to improve it. The usefulness of the web site, e-mail and the information provided to our members was also highlighted. Overall, it was an educational and enlightening experience to all who attended.

BALTIMORE