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Oncology News

HOT TOPICS FROM ESMO 2012

The key message from this year's European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) was that equal access to cancer care is a medical and ethical imperative, including early diagnosis, treatment and supportive care.

Personalised medicine

President of the society, Prof Martine Piccart addressed the conference on the final day, "The goal we are working toward is personalised medicine, and there is a long road to travel before we get there... High quality cancer care can extend the lives of patients and significantly lessen their suffering, and thereby also the costs to society." Piccart concluded with a call to intensify international collaborative research.

Managing the costs of emerging oncology therapies

The congress highlighted the growing need to address issues of health economics in the field of oncology. The Young Oncologist's breakfast session was a forum exploring the management of the costs of emerging therapies. Shocking figures from the conference include the fact that the annual EU cost of cancer care is a staggering 124 billion euro and research suggests that European countries are spending between 4.1% and 10.6% of healthcare resources on cancer care.

Integrated oncology and palliative care

The European Society for Medical Oncology also awarded ESMO Designated Center of Integrated Oncology and Palliative Care accreditation to 16 new oncology centres. First set up in 2003, this project aims to improve the infrastructure for the provision of palliative care globally. The initiative came partly in response to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report "Cancer pain relief and palliative care".

For more information, please visit: www.esmo.org

ECIO highlights potential of interventional oncology

As always, the European Conference on Interventional Oncology (ECIO) provided attendees with interesting insights into the latest developments in the growing discipline of interventional oncology. The congress opened with a look at cutting-edge research, in Image-guided tumour ablation: technological advances. New ablation methods such as focused ultrasound, microwave ablation and irreversible electroporation were discussed, and the session also examined whether in light of these new data, the "gold-standard" therapy, radiofrequency ablation, is still a viable and effective treatment option.

The honorary lecture was given by Prof. Andreas Adam. He delved into both the clinical and political aspects of interventional oncology and argued that in order to deliver robust and effective treatment safely, interventional oncology (and interventional radiology generally) must remain anchored within the radiology department, as well as developing their natural partnership with radiation oncologists further.

Another key presentation came from Dr. Lizbeth Kenny, renowned radiation oncologist. Fittingly she focused on the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration for cancer care. A debate afterwards dealt with the question of creating a specific curriculum for interventional oncology.

The drug delivery in interventional oncology session gave a fascinating introduction to the most dynamic area of oncology local delivery of targeted drugs. IR plays a central role in accurately deploying the gene-therapies, thermally activated liposomes and modified viruses that herald the future of cancer treatment.

For more information on the conference, please visit: www.esir.org

ELEKTA and philips establish research consortium for cancer care

Elekta and Royal Philips Electronics will expand a joint programme to develop a breakthrough in cancer care with an imaging-treatment platform that merges radiation therapy and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology in a single treatment system. The programme for development will include a research consortium of leading radiation oncology centres and clinicians, which today includes the University Medical Centre Utrecht (the Netherlands).

The consortium's mission will be to merge precision radiation delivery with MRI in a single MRI-guided radiation therapy system. This will enable doctors to achieve exceptional soft tissue imaging during radiation therapy and to adapt treatment delivery in real-time for extremely precise cancer treatments. Working with University Medical Center Utrecht, the medical device companies have built and tested a prototype system that integrates a linear accelerator and a 1.5 Tesla MRI system. The success of early tests has enabled the project to move to the next phase of development and testing by a select group of consortium partners.

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