The congress

The Congress of the European Society of Medical Oncology was celebrated on September 26 to 30, 2014, in the Fairground Institution of Madrid (IFEMA). In that meeting, the new scientific advances on cancer studies were presented. Advances in clinical trials of several aggressive cancer types were presented, including the Cleopatra clinical trial phase III in HER2 positive breast cancer. Detailed practices, policies and financial aspects relevant for the advancement of the collaboration between clinical researchers and healthcare personnel were also discussed. The need to provide an optimal care to cancer patients was debated as well.

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a statistically significant difference was detected in the overall survival, higher in the trial branch treated with Avastin® plus chemotherapy as compared to the one receiving Erbitux® plus chemotherapy (32 vs. 31.2, respectively). Therefore, the treatment with Roche’s Avastin® retains its leading position at the therapeutic setting.

Other results from this company, based on Basilea, were presented, such as the coBRIM phase III trial [4], using Cobimetinib in advanced melanoma. The results showed that the combination of the MEK inhibitor Cobimetinib with the BRAF inhibitor Zelboraf® (Vemurafenib) contribute to increase the progression-free survival in patients carrying the BRAF V600 mutation, compared to monotherapy with Vemurafenib (9.9 vs. 6.2 months). These encouraging results could lay the foundations for a new treatment of reference against this aggressive skin cancer.

Also, new details were brought about the innovative immunotherapy MPDL3280A in bladder cancer, which results were the breaking news on the last edition of the American Society of Clinical Cancer (ASCO), held in June 2014 in Chicago. After 30 years without hope for this type of cancer, personalized anti-PDL1 immunotherapy effectively reduced tumor size in 43 % of the patients suffering from a specific type of metastatic bladder cancer.

Other results were presented, in patients with uterus neck (cervix) cancer which reappeared after treatment or spread to other body regions. In those patients, tumor incidence can be decreases by using the experimental drug Cediranib developed by AstraZeneca, compared to the standard chemotherapy treatment, with a moderate improvement in progression-free survival. As remarked by Dr. Paul Symonds, from the Department of Cancer Studies and Molecular Medicine at the University of Leicester and leading researcher on this type of tumors, uterus neck tumors showing a well developed blood irrigation network are of bad prognosis. The Cediranib experimental drug advantageously blocks the vascular endothelial growth factor on the cell surface of the tumor, impeding by these means the growth of new blood vessels for tumor blood irrigation.

Significantly, about 70 % of uterus neck cancer patients in Europe are treated with surgery or chemotherapy. Those presenting recurrent or secondary cancer are of bad prognosis, and only 20-30 % of patients reduce tumors following conventional chemotherapy, also showing a survival of less than a year [5].

Reena Khanna, specialist from the International Medical Society (IMS) consultation in London stressed out that 7 % of oncology patients interrupt treatment due to the secondary effects of therapies, according to a recent survey conducted in Europe among 7899 patients in France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain which was presented at the Congress. Taking this into account, a new treatment was announced to reduce nausea and vomiting in patients receiving a chemotherapy regime using the drug Cisplatin®.

**Concluding remarks**

Detailed practices, policies and financial aspects relevant for the advancement of the collaboration between clinical researchers and healthcare personnel were also discussed at the Congress of the European Society of Medical Oncology, ESMO 2014. The need to provide an optimal care to cancer patients was debated as well. The leading role of ESMO in fighting cancer disease associated to more than 200 different tumor types is part of its programmatic platform. The challenge in oncology resides on the availability of treatments able to fit patient properties and tumor specificities at the same time. In fact, 70 % of breast cancer, 50 % of advanced colon cancer and 20 % of lung cancer cases are currently being treated precisely.

The tree major messages of this Congress, which next meeting was officially announced for 2016 in Copenhagen, Denmark, were: 1) immunotherapy as emergent treatment with great potential; 2) targeted therapies as consolidated treatment; and 3) the advances in the molecular knowledge of tumors as basic research to develop precision medicine.

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