

Polish-German conference on oncology pharmacy

Polish-German conferences in oncology pharmacy have become an established tradition. The 6th conference took place in Dresden, Germany, on 12–13 June 2009, with the theme ‘Training close to practice with certainty’.

The programme of the conference included plenary lectures, workshops and a satellite symposium organised by GlaxoSmithKline on oral therapy in oncology. The lectures covered different aspects of advances in the treatment of malignant tumours and practical problems of quality and safety of oncology pharmacy services.

In a key lecture ‘Targeted treatment of haematologic malignancies shows a new way in oncology’, Professor Holowiecki, Oncology Institute in Gliwice, Poland, said that thanks to recent advances in our understanding of the molecular pathology of leukaemia, targeted therapies directed toward specific genetic lesions within malignant cells have been developed. These have contributed to advanced cure rates with low toxicity. Such progress is best exemplified by the use of all-trans retinoic acid (ATRA) as part of therapy for acute promyelocytic leukaemia, which nowadays is curable for 84% of patients. For example, the introduction of the tyrosine kinase inhibitor, imanitib, has also revolutionised the treatment of chronic myelogenous leukaemia and significantly improved the prognosis. Imanitib inhibits the BCR-ABL fusion protein, a constitutively activated form of the ABL tyrosine kinase, which plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis. However, due to the development of imanitib resistance, new drugs have recently been registered: dasatinib and nilotinib. In acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) studies have focused on FLT-3, *c-kit* and farnesyl transferase inhibitors. It has been found that for optimal results FLT-3 inhibitors in combination with other agents will probably be required. Tipifarnib, a farnesyl transferase inhibitor, for instance, was found to enhance the etoposide activity in resistant AML, while as a single agent it has limited efficacy. Many small molecule drugs are currently in trials for the therapy of solid tumours such as breast cancer (lapatinib), renal cancer (sorafenib and sunitinib) and non-small cell lung cancer (erlotinib). Over the last two decades, detailed studies have led to the selection of targets for humanised monoclonal antibodies and immunoconjugates. Their success is best demonstrated as part of the treatment of non-Hodgkin lymphomas and B cell-derived leukaemias. Monoclonal antibodies are also useful for the treatment of T cell malignancies and myeloblastic leukaemia as well as some solid tumours (breast and renal carcinoma). Professor Holowiecki concluded his lecture by saying that recent advances in targeted treatment should lead to a significant improvement in cancer therapy.

Dr Gil from Poznań, Poland, continued the topic by discussing tyrosine kinase inhibitors in the treatment of chronic myelogenous leukaemia, while Professor Palka from Białystok,



Participants of the workshop

Poland, focused on new strategies of inhibition receptors of epidermal growth factor and vascular growth factor. The topic of patient information was also discussed by Y Remane from Leipzig, Germany, and information leaflets for patients about the correct use of dasatinib were also presented by E Korczowska and H Jankowiak-Gracz from Poznań, Poland.

Three German (aseptic work, case reports and psycho-oncology) and two Polish (case reports and psycho-oncology) workshops were also excellently prepared and led, with all the participants engaged in lively discussions.

I am sure that all the conference delegates went back home enriched with new knowledge and ideas, as well as with a feeling of a stronger friendship between oncology pharmacists in both countries.

We are already looking forward to the 7th Polish-German Conference, which will be held in June 2010 in Wrocław, Poland.

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