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# 10th Annual Meeting of Polish oncology pharmacists

This meeting highlighted both the necessity and opportunities for oncology pharmacy in Poland as in other European countries.

**T**his meeting, held in Warsaw, 19-22 October 2009, was also the 10th anniversary of the oncology pharmacy movement in Poland, and invitations were extended to important guests such as Ms Carole Chambers, the President of ISOPP, Mr Klaus Meier, President of ESOP, and Dr John Wiernikowski, Paediatric Oncology Pharmacist, Canada.

During the opening ceremony Ms Carole Chambers explained to participants (nearly 150) the activities of the International Society of Oncology Pharmacy Practitioners and highlighted the benefits of being a member. This was followed by the opening lecture entitled 'To be patient. To be ill, to cure, to die and to live', given by Professor Tadeusz Kobierzycki, Professor of Philosophy, Music University, Warsaw. This was an anthropological perspective and overview of how the problems of life, disease, and death were treated in ancient and modern philosophy. He defined also disease and health from a philosophical point of view and characterised patients in relation to their behaviour in disease.



Recent advances in oncology were highlighted by Professor Dr Jedrzejczak who spoke about new drugs and targets in haematological malignancies. He focused on target therapy, underlining the role of imatinib in the development of new therapeutic agents and discussed some of the most recent clinical trials involving dasatinib, nilotinib and bosutinib. Professor Dr Szczylik examined the molecular basis of carcinogenesis, and the ways in which to affect different molecular pathways, using, as an example, targeted therapy of renal cell carcinoma with sunitinib, sorafenib, temsirolimus and bevacizumab.

Delegates were also treated to lectures on the optimisation of pharmacotherapy in the elderly; antitumour treatment in pregnancy and practical considerations in paediatric oncology pharmacy. This was presented by Dr J Wiernikowski from McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton, Canada. He discussed known risk factors and facts about childhood cancers. Dr Wiernikowski also spoke about specific drug and treatment issues and also gave an overview on clinical aspects including assessing toxicity,

neutropenia, infections, neuropathies, thrombosis and nausea and vomiting which differ from those in adults. The subsequent effects of paediatric cancer treatment are very often unperceivable and unappreciated. These include a lower health quality of life for survivors than in the general population; cardiac complications (especially with anthracyclines); neurocognitive deficiency; obesity; endocrine complications (GH deficiency, primary hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism); metabolic complications; decreased bone mineral density; and secondary cancers. People who were cured of cancer in their childhood have also very often poorer social outcomes. Dr Wiernikowski described some possible interventions.

During the last plenary session of lectures Dr Filipczyk-Cisarz looked at the cardiotoxicity of cytostatics. She described the mechanisms of cardiotoxicity of anthracyclines and vinca alkaloids. Cardiotoxicity can also be a side effect of target therapy drugs such as lapatinib and imatinib as well as hormonal agents, especially aromatase inhibitors. Dr Filipczyk-Cisarz gave practical advice on how to cope with the problem, and also emphasised that while qualifying patients for treatment the risk of cardiac complications should be taken into consideration.

In his presentation, the ESOP President, Mr Klaus Meier, emphasised the need for good patient support as the basis for improved collaboration between all health professionals. The oncology pharmacist can make an important contribution to this collaboration. He also emphasised the continued necessity and opportunities for oncology pharmacy in Poland as in other European countries.

During the conference there was also the opportunity for delegates to meet with the Chief Pharmaceutical Inspector. This, importantly, was the first time Polish oncology pharmacists had the chance to discuss their problems directly with the most important pharmacy officer in Poland. The discussion was often heated and lasted long after the scheduled time, but was indeed thorough. Attendees were reassured that the Chief Pharmaceutical Inspector is very interested in the problems of the oncology pharmacist and will try to solve some of them! It was agreed that this was a successful meeting which should be continued in the future.

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