



Research

PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK

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PANCREATIC CANCER: NEWS & UPDATES **August 28, 2008**

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

See following three attachments:

- (1) 2009 Pancreatic Cancer Action Network – AACR Research Grants Program;
- (2) NIH Announces 7 New Funding Opportunities Relating to Cancer; and
- (3) American Cancer Society Offers Funding Opportunities in Palliative Care Research.

Are PET Scans Beneficial During Cancer Diagnosis, Staging and Monitoring?

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/118190.php>

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services currently approves PET scans for several types of cancer including colorectal, pancreatic, lymphoma, head and neck, testicular and several others. This agency is currently studying how PET scans might change oncology treatment decisions and improve patient outcomes.

Chemotherapy and Radiation After Surgery Prolongs Life For Pancreatic Cancer Patients

<http://www.cancercompass.com/cancer-news/1,14524,00.htm>

Johns Hopkins researchers report that pancreatic cancer patients treated with a combination of chemotherapy and radiation after surgery survive approximately six months longer than those receiving surgery alone. They reviewed 616 patients who had surgery to remove their pancreatic cancer and compared the survival of 345 of the patients who had surgery alone with 271 who were then treated with 5-fluorouracil (FU)-based chemotherapy agents and modern types of radiation. Patients receiving the combined chemotherapy and radiation experienced an improved median survival when compared with patients who did not (21.2 vs. 14.4 months). Two-year survival also improved (43.9% vs. 31.9%), as did five-year survival (20.1% vs. 15.4%).

Adjuvant Chemoradiotherapy May Improve Survival in Pancreatic Cancer

<http://www.oncolink.com/resources/article.cfm?c=3&s=8&ss=23&Year=2008&Month=08&id=15530>

Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota researchers reported on the results of a retrospective study of patients who underwent complete resection for pancreatic cancer between 1975 and 2005. They reported that with adjuvant chemotherapy and radiation, the median survival was 25.2 months versus 19.2 months with no adjuvant therapy.

FDA Investigates Possible Vytorin Link to Cancer

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALegM5j8be55zJpBjn1oPtPiRjkbhkJwNgD92MVAUG0>

Federal drug safety regulators report that they are investigating whether the cholesterol-lowering drug Vytorin can increase patients' risk of developing cancer. The FDA said patients should not stop taking Vytorin because the evidence of a cancer link is unclear. While one recent clinical trial indicated higher rates of cancer for patients taking the medication, two studies currently under way have shown no increased risk, the FDA said. Ironically, statins a few years ago were being studied as a possible prevention for certain cancers; those studies ultimately found no effect on cancer. The FDA anticipates its investigation and analysis will take about nine months.

Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Cancer Center Researchers Find Gene Therapy that Kills Pancreatic Cancer Cells

<http://www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=2582>

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/543225/>

Virginia Commonwealth University researchers recently published findings that implicate a new chemoprevention gene therapy (CGT) for preventing and treating pancreatic cancer. They showed that combining a dietary agent with a gene-delivered cytokine effectively eliminated human pancreatic cancer cells in mice displaying sensitivity to these highly aggressive and lethal cancer cells.



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Vitamin C Shows Promise as Cancer Treatment – Shrunk Brain, Ovarian and Pancreatic Tumors in Mice

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_67795.html

<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/aug2008/niddk-04.htm>

The National Institutes of Health reports that high-dose injections of vitamin C, also known as ascorbate or ascorbic acid, reduced tumor weight and growth rate by about 50% in mouse models of brain, ovarian, and pancreatic cancers.

Radiation can Zap Cancer that has Spread

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26183744>

University of Chicago Medical Center researchers report that precisely targeted radiation therapy can eradicate tumors that have spread to other parts of the body offering more months or years of life to those who have no other options. Of the 29 metastatic cancer patients studied, radiation stopped all tumors in six patients for 10 months to more than two years. However, researchers note that the results were inconsistent — in another six patients, only the treated tumors grew, while in yet another six, untreated tumors remained and grew. The researchers hope to find a genetic signature or some other way of identifying the patients who may benefit from this treatment.

Many Cancer Patients Turn to Complementary Medicine

<http://www.medpagetoday.com/PrimaryCare/AlternativeMedicine/tb/10410>

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/NWS/content/NWS_1_1x_Study_Offers_Portrait_of_Complementary_Therapy_Use_Among_Survivors.asp

According to a study by the American Cancer Society, more than 60% of cancer survivors use complementary medicine (primarily related to faith and spirituality), although usage varies by race, gender, age, income, education and type of cancer: survivors of melanoma and kidney cancer were *least* likely to use complementary medicine, whereas breast and ovarian cancer survivors were most likely.

UK Pancreatic Cancer Survivor Reports Treatment Received in Spain a Success

<http://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/content/news/story.aspx?brand=ENOnline&category=News&tBrand=ENOnline&tCategory=news&itemid=NOED09%20Aug%202008%2007%3A58%3A07%3A310>

This story originated in late June when a UK resident reported that she was forced to remortgage her home so she could travel to Spain for life saving treatment with Cyberknife. While her UK physician claimed this was her only viable treatment option, Cyberknife is not a proven therapy for pancreatic cancer. The patient is back in the news because she recently returned to the UK having had several Cyberknife sessions in Spain and is thankful to have second chance. A second UK resident and pancreatic cancer survivor is also referenced in the article as having to travel (in his case to Turkey) to receive CyberKnife treatment.

Spice-Based Compound May Kill Cancer Cells

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/08/080817223644.htm>

Centuries of anecdotal evidence and recent scientific research suggest curcumin (a naturally occurring compound found in the spice turmeric) has multiple disease-fighting features, including anti-tumor properties. However, when ingested, curcumin is not absorbed well by the body and is eliminated before it is able to enter the bloodstream or tissues. Newer evidence reveals how curcumin interacts with certain proteins to generate anti-cancer activity inside the body and researchers are focusing on those pathways that are most involved in cancer. Also see following link:

<http://www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1217492162313040.xml&coll=2>. University

of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) researchers are exploring the possibility that curcumin may inhibit the growth of pancreatic cancer and greatly increase its susceptibility to chemotherapy treatment. UAB researchers reported that the Alabama American Cancer Society revived the research after it stalled due to funding running out. Laboratory testing shows that curcumin greatly enhances the chemotherapy agent gemcitabine, producing a synergistic effect.



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What Makes Pancreatic Cancer So Deadly?

<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=experts-pancreatic-cancer-gene-upshaw>

In response to Gene Upshaw's sudden death from pancreatic cancer, Scientific American interviewed Dr. Allyson Ocean an oncologist at New York- Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center to understand how pancreatic cancer took Upshaw only four days after diagnosis.

Drug Costs Lead to Tight Reimbursement, Pressure on Patients

http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/djf500/200808210915DOWJONESDJONLINE000590_FORTUNE5.htm

The high price tag on some drugs is prompting cost-conscious health insurers to tighten their control over reimbursements. The effort to control costs could lead to tough decisions about cost-effectiveness of treatments and may hurt the demand for drugs that don't offer a clear or meaningful benefit. For biotech drugs that have no comparable competitors, there is virtually no limit to their potential price. That has forced payors to increasingly limit coverage of some off-label uses. Earlier this year, UnitedHealth Group Inc. (UNH) began to base its cancer- coverage decisions on guidelines from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, which is now used by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The reimbursement environment is moving toward higher patient co-pays and more supplemental insurance, which creates a challenge for high-priced biotech drugs.

Health Care Expenses: Your Money or Your Life

<http://www.isthmus.com/isthmus/article.php?article=23481>

This article addresses the economic impact of cancer care given that agents like Avastin and Tarceva, both biologics, are costly treatments. Tarceva which received FDA approval in 2005 as first-line treatment in combination with Gemzar for inoperable pancreatic cancer, showed a medical overall survival benefit of almost 13 days compared with Gemzar alone, and cost thousands of dollars per month. Having more and better information about the costs and benefits of care, may help patients make better personal decisions about what is worth paying for.

Public Research Funding is Sought for Erie Man's Cancer Treatment Technique

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08212/900337-114.stm>. Also see following link about the Kanzius RF therapy that is purported to be a promising new cancer treatment that may one day replace radiation and chemotherapy: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/04/10/60minutes/main4006951.shtml>. The Kanzius therapy is noninvasive and uses nontoxic radio waves combined with gold or carbon nanoparticles attached to cancer cells which "cooks" tumors inside the body with harmless radio waves. MD Anderson and University of Pittsburgh researchers are studying this new cancer treatment, which could go into human trials as early as 2010. The support of senators from Texas and other states have been sought to seek federal funding to advance the research.

Cancer Patients Are Not Given Enough Information

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-07/bmj-cpa073008.php

A study recently published in the *British Medical Journal* reports that two thirds of cancer patients receive little or no information about the survival benefits of having palliative chemotherapy before making a decision about treatment. The study recorded 37 advanced colorectal, non-small cell lung, and pancreatic cancer patients' consultations with their oncologist. There was consistency in informing patients that a cure was not being sought for them, but the amount of information about survival benefit varied considerably. Only six patients out of 37 were given numerical data (e.g., "about four weeks") about the survival benefits of treatment. The researchers note that while the oncologist's reluctance to give information about the limited survival gain of palliative chemotherapy may be due to their desire to protect the patient from bad news, it may actually be hampering patients' ability to make informed decisions about their treatment. Link to full publication: http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/337/jul31_3/a752



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Cancer Patients at Increased Risk for Suicide

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_68066.html

<http://www.oncolink.com/resources/article.cfm?c=3&s=8&ss=23&Year=2008&Month=08&id=15529>

According to three recent published results, cancer patients often think about ending their lives and their suicide rate are roughly double that seen in the general population. Emotional distress was the strongest predictor of suicidal thoughts, followed by substantial pain and older age.