PRODUCT UPDATE

Valerie Burger, RN, MA, MS, OCN®
Associate Editor

PHARMACY CORNER

Combination Drugs Are Approved to Treat Cervical Cancer

Hycamtin® (topotecan HCl) (GlaxoSmithKline, Philadelphia, PA) in combination with cisplatin has been approved for the treatment of stage IV-B cervical cancer by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Advanced cervical cancer has a very poor prognosis, and new treatments are needed. A phase III clinical trial showed a distinct survival advantage when using topotecan HCl in conjunction with cisplatin over cisplatin alone. Hycamtin belongs to a classification of drugs known as topoisomerase-I inhibitors. Topoisomerase-I is a protein that is needed for a cell to divide. Hycamtin interacts with the naturally occurring topoisomerase-I in the cell and results in permanent damage to a cell's genetic material, causing cell death. Topotecan HCl originally was approved to treat non-small cell lung cancer. The most common dose-limiting side effect of the drug combination was myelosuppression. For more information on Hycamtin, visit http://us.gsk.com/products/assets/us_hycamtin.pdf.

New Oral Agents Are on the Horizon

AT-101 (Ascenta Therapeutics, Atlanta, GA) was presented as a new drug at the 2006 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) annual meeting. Currently in phase II trials, AT-101 is an orally bioavailable pan-Bcl-2 inhibitor. AT-101 acts to trigger programmed cell death (apoptosis) of cancer cells by inhibiting the activity of certain proteins necessary for cancer cells to survive. The trials are studying AT-101 as an agent to treat diseases such as chronic lymphocytic leukemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and prostate cancer.

Another new drug that received coverage at the latest ASCO meeting is Eli Lilly and Company's (Indianapolis, IN) oral investigational drug enzastaurin. Enzastaurin is in phase II trials for the treatment of glioblastoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Enzastaurin has a synergistic effect with many established medications without adding significantly to the side-effect profile of treatment. The drug is an oral serine-threonin kinase inhibitor that suppresses tumor growth by reducing a cell's ability to divide, and it increases apoptosis while inhibiting angiogenesis (the growth of a blood vessel to supply a tumor with nutrients).

Drug Approved for Compassionate Use in Genetic Disorder

Introgen's (Austin, TX) advexin p53 therapy was used successfully to treat a patient with cancer with Li-Fraumeni syndrome (LFS); the drug is now available on a compassionate-use basis under a protocol approved by the FDA. LFS is an inherited genetic disorder that increases the risk of developing several types of cancer, usually beginning at a very early age. The majority of LFS families have an inherited mutation in the *p53* tumor suppressor gene. Advexin p53 represents another use of targeted therapy against a specific gene function and an opportunity for oncologists to tailor treatment to individual needs. For more information on the use of the drug, call Introgen at 866-631-4646.

NEW PRODUCTS

Chlorhexidine-Impregnated Cloth Prepares Skin for Surgery

Sage Products, Inc. (Cary, IL), has introduced a new, alcohol-free 2% chlorhexidine gluconate perioperative skin preparation applicator cloth. The cloth skin preparation is the first of its kind to be approved by the FDA. Surgical site infections (SSIs) are complications that cost time and money for patients and hospitals. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement suggests that 2.6%–5% of surgical procedures result in SSIs, which increase the costs of hospitalization and length of stay. The Sage 2% chlorhexidine gluconate cloth provides a unique way to prepare a patient's skin and operative site to minimize the amount of cutaneous microflora that can be responsible for SSIs. Chlorhexidine has a broad spectrum of activity against bacteria, including gram-negative organisms. The unique cloth applicator allows for uniform dosing of chlorhexidine gluconate while covering a large area of skin and contouring hard-to-reach crevices. For more information, visit www.sageproducts.com/products/skin-prep.asp or call 800-323-2220.

Electronic Medical Record Can Be Carried by Patients

Sytec Health, LLC (Spring Lake, MI), has introduced a new and convenient way for patients to carry their medical records. LifeKey® is a portable USB flash drive that is small enough to carry on a keychain or neck cord. In medical emergencies, LifeKey provides healthcare workers with immediate access to patients' medical histories without the need for special computer services. LifeKey is a subscription service provided by Sytec Health. Patients or physicians send photocopies of medical records to Sytec Health, and the company will scan all of the documents and maintain and update patients' medical records. The electronic records have the look and feel of standard paper records. For more information about LifeKey, visit www.mylifekey.com.

Gene Test Will Give Physicians Vital Information

Genomic Health, Inc. (Redwood City, CA), has announced results of tests confirming that the Oncotype DX 21-gene panel quantifies the risk of breast cancer recurrence and predicts the likelihood of response to chemotherapy. Oncotype DX uses RNA analysis of tumor tissue to measure the expression profile of 21 genes demonstrated to be involved with breast cancer. Based on the results of these tests, a recurrence score from 0–100 is determined. The test results have helped guide subsequent treatment decisions. According to one study, patients with a high recurrence score and high risk of recurrence, as identified by the Oncotype DX, had large benefits from chemotherapy. Patients with low recurrence scores and low risks of recurrence had only minimal, if any, benefit from chemotherapy. A new study, TAILORx, is looking at individualizing cancer treatment by using, evaluating, and improving the latest diagnostic tests. According to the study, Oncotype DX will quantify each person's individual risk of recurrence. Oncotype DX

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