

# Nursing Considerations for Patients With Sarcoma on Pazopanib Therapy

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**Background:** Pazopanib was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in patients with soft tissue sarcoma (STS) in 2012. Because of the scarcity of effective treatments for advanced STS, pazopanib has become commonly prescribed.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge level of nurses regarding the safe administration of pazopanib, as well as management of its side effects. The study was also intended to examine the consistency of patient education about pazopanib.

**Methods:** A 12-question online survey was completed by six nurses working in the outpatient sarcoma department of a National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer center. The survey included questions about patient education, including side-effect management and medication safety.

**Findings:** The survey revealed that most nurses were consistent with best practices surrounding pazopanib teaching and side-effect management. However, many differences were observed, and patient education regarding drug interactions and the safe administration of pazopanib is lacking. Further standardization of nursing practice in this regard would greatly benefit patients taking pazopanib.

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Pazopanib is an oral medication that was approved in April 2012 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of soft tissue sarcoma (STS) in patients who experienced disease progression with previous chemotherapy (National Cancer Institute [NCI], 2013). Because of the scarcity of effective treatments for advanced STS, pazopanib has become a commonly prescribed therapy in this patient population.

## Background

As a multitargeted tyrosine kinase inhibitor (TKI), pazopanib targets the vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), platelet-derived growth factor, and c-kit. TKIs are targeted cancer treatments with a mechanism of action in competitive adenosine triphosphate inhibition at the catalytic binding site of tyrosine kinase (Hartmann, Haap, Kopp, & Lipp, 2009). VEGF inhibitors, including pazopanib, prevent angiogenesis by inhibiting VEGF receptors and limiting the vascular supply to the tumor, thereby stunting growth (GlaxoSmithKline, 2015).

Although pazopanib can be a safe and effective treatment for STS, patients who are prescribed the drug must be properly educated about it. Oncology nurses play a crucial role in patient education regarding the correct administration of pazopanib, as well as the management of its side effects. However, the rapid increase of pazopanib prescriptions for patients with STS has created an educational need among the nurses working with this population.

Pazopanib has been used as a treatment for patients with STS at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in New York, an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center. To assess the strengths and weaknesses of patient education about pazopanib at MSKCC, and to determine if standardization of patient education was necessary, nurses working in the center's outpatient sarcoma department were surveyed.

## Methods

A 12-question online survey was designed by the current authors in response to conversations among nurses working