

US cancer care: treatment choices are all about you

May 29 2009, by Jean-Louis Santini

US cancer experts are preparing to focus on new developments in making treatment ever more personalized, right down to the molecular level, at their main annual gathering this weekend.

"We have a theme at the meeting this year: personalizing [cancer care](#), ranging from using molecular analysis to select the most appropriate treatment for patients through developing personalized survivalship care plans for [cancer survivors](#)," said Richard Schilsky, president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), which is holding its annual meeting in Orlando, Florida.

Worldwide, about 13 percent of deaths are caused by cancer. Results from dozens of clinical studies will be released at the gathering opening Friday and running through June 2. Some 30,000 people are expected to take part.

"I think it's clear to all of us who are treating cancer patients that oncology is no longer one-sided; it's all medicine," Schilsky said, noting that great strides had been made in selecting the best treatments for a given patient.

"We are increasingly able to tailor treatment to an individual," such as their particular tumor biology, "matching the right treatment to the right patient at the right time allowing patients to avoid unnecessary cost and side effects from therapy that won't help them," Schilsky stressed. "It's very clear to me that is the future of cancer medicine."

In total, 4,000 research works were accepted by ASCO on a broad range of topics in oncology, said Eric Winer, a Harvard University professor associated with the group.

Seven press conferences have been scheduled, including two on Saturday on the results of gastrointestinal tumors and advanced [lung cancer](#) research.

Two more are planned for Sunday to discuss results of [breast cancer](#) and ovarian cancer research, as well as personalized treatment plans.

On Monday, experts will discuss strides made in cancer care, as well as on current major challenges facing [oncology](#).

Among the clinical results due out are phase two trial results on Nexavar, made by Germany's Bayer for advanced lung cancer treatment.

Nexavar, which works by blocking the growth of blood vessels feeding a tumor, leading to the death of some cancer cells, already is marketed in more than 70 countries as a liver cancer treatment.

Results are also awaited with interest on Avastin, a breast cancer treatment by US firm Genentech, which has been bought by Switzerland's Roche.

Cancer is a leading cause of death in the world, blamed for 7.4 million deaths in 2004, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The deadliest cancers are lung, stomach, colon, liver and breast cancer.

About 30 percent of cancer deaths could be avoided, the WHO says, with smoking the leading lifestyle risk.

Cancer begins with the modification of a single cell -- and can be caused

by external, genetic or hereditary factors, or a combination of these.

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