

American Society of Clinical Oncology issues annual report on progress against cancer

December 5 2011

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) today released Clinical Cancer Advances 2011: ASCO's Annual Report on Progress Against Cancer, an independent review of the advances in cancer research that have had the greatest impact on patient care this year. The report also identifies the most promising trends in oncology and provides insights from experts on where the future of cancer care is heading.

"We've made significant strides in clinical cancer research over the past year and this report adds renewed hope for patients," said Nicholas J. Vogelzang, MD, Co-Executive Editor of the report. "More personalized treatment approaches and advances in early detection are helping patients live longer, healthier lives. But we must improve the nation's clinical research system and expand access to quality [cancer care](#) to accelerate the pace of progress."

This year's top research advances demonstrate new therapies for reducing [cancer recurrence](#), progress made against hard-to-treat cancers, and improvements in [cancer prevention](#) and screening. The report also highlights several new drug approvals that bring smarter, more effective therapies to specific genetic subgroups of patients with cancer. The top five advances selected by the editors are:

- A Phase III study finding that vemurafenib (Zelboraf), which targets a common mutation in melanoma in a gene called BRAF, improved overall survival in patients with advanced melanoma

when compared to standard chemotherapy

- A large national screening trial of more than 50,000 current and former [heavy smokers](#) that found three annual low-dose computed tomography (CT) scans reduced the death rate from lung cancer by 20 percent compared to those who were screened with three annual chest X-rays
- FDA approvals on therapies for two hard-to-treat cancers:
 1. Crizotinib (Xalkori) was approved for patients with advanced non-small-cell lung cancer who harbor a specific type of alteration in the [anaplastic lymphoma](#) kinase (ALK) gene based on the results from two Phase II studies: one study demonstrated that 50 percent of patients experienced complete or partial tumor shrinkage for a median of 10 months and a second study found a 61 percent objective response rate lasting a median of 12 months
 2. Ipilimumab (Yervoy) – an immune therapy that activates the immune system's T cells – was approved for patients with previously untreated metastatic melanoma based on the results of a Phase III trial showing that the drug, combined with the standard chemotherapy drug dacarbazine, improved overall survival by two months
- The first conclusive evidence that an aromatase inhibitor reduced the risk of a first breast cancer, making exemestane (Aromasin) a preventative treatment option for postmenopausal women who are at high risk for the disease.

Selected by an 18-person editorial board of prominent oncologists, the report highlights a total of 54 advances in clinical oncology over the past year and covers the full scope of patient care, including cancer disparities, advanced cancer care and survivor care. Clinical Cancer Advances 2011 also features a "Year in Review" section, which

describes key cancer policy developments and ASCO policy initiatives from the past year that are likely to influence cancer care over the coming years. Some of the important topics covered in this section include:

- ASCO's recommendations for re-vitalizing U.S. [clinical cancer research](#) for the molecular era, captured in the new report, [Accelerating Progress Against Cancer: ASCO's Blueprint for Transforming Clinical and Translational Cancer Research](#)
- Efforts to address the growing problem of oncology drug shortages
- The potential impact of healthcare reform in addressing [cancer](#) disparities

Provided by American Society of Clinical Oncology

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