

McGuire: Trials Offer Promise, Progress in Ovarian Cancer

Dr. Bill McGuire, Director of the Weinberg Cancer Institute, Franklin Square Hospital Center in Baltimore, Maryland, held the rapt attention of more than 70 survivors and other guests on Monday evening, March 23, when he addressed OGCC/Rhonda's Club. *[Dr. Charles Boice, who was also to speak, was called away for emergency surgery.]*

McGuire reinforced conventional wisdom that for now, **the best initial treatment** is still surgery, staging (by a gynecologic oncologist) and then chemotherapy with platinum and taxane drug combination. A five-arm trial concluded that adding additional medications, such as Gemzar and topotecan did not improve survival, yet additional toxicities occurred.

Further, a trial testing three versus six cycles of the first-line drugs concluded that six cycles offered patients longer progression-free survival.

Laparoscopy? No, according to Dr. McGuire. He believes that when a known mass is present, there is too great a risk of rupturing the tumor capsule – which can lead to a poor outcome. He believes that vanity shouldn't enter it to it: "I can live with my wife having a scar from stem to stern!"

Is more better? At this time, 75 percent of patients have a complete clinical response after initial treatment – but 50-75 percent go on to recur. The positive news is that the median PFS – progression-free survival – has increased from 18 to 24 months. And median overall survival has increased from 36 to 60 months. Dr. McGuire believes that the increasingly widespread use of Avastin is improving both progression-free and overall survival.

A look at strategies to improve outcomes:

- **New agents: Bevacizumab (Avastin)** – a monoclonal antibody, is undergoing numerous trials for ovarian cancer. It had FDA approval only for lung, colon and breast cancer – yet ovarian is the only cancer that responds to

Don't Miss This Event!

OGCC's Education Session – Monday, June 8

Come listen to two experts from Walter Reed!

The Biology of Ovarian Cancer and The Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Movement

With

John Farley, MD and Larry Maxwell, MD

John Farley, MD, Associate Prof. Of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) and Larry Maxwell, MD, Director of the Gynecologic Disease Center, Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Dr. Farley will discuss the biology of ovarian cancer, an important topic in light of new developments in treatment; and Dr. Maxwell will tell us about the coming November 6-8 *Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Movement Weekend* here in Washington, DC.

Where: George Washington University Hospital
Lincoln Room (Lower Level)
900 23rd St. NW (at the Foggy Bottom Metro;
Parking available in I Street garage)

When: Monday, March 23, 2009 – 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Register: Leave a message at 202-332-3358 or email cdonelan@verizon.net. Walk-ins welcome but registering helps us plan better.

Everyone is welcome!

Avastin by itself. *[Ed. Note: Medicare has now approved coverage with Avastin for ovarian cancer – a very important step.]*

Avastin does not cause neuropathy and has no cumulative effect; Dr. McGuire has had some patients on it for three years. One downside is the possibility of bowel perforation; the drug should not be used in the presence of rectal or vaginal metastases. Other concerns can be hypertension, headaches and nosebleeds; usually these are managed by administration of a calcium channel-blocker. Dosage is usually once every three weeks

McGuire. cont p2.

OGCC's Medical Advisory Board

The Medical Advisory Board consists of gynecologic oncologists and other medical experts who are involved with the treatment and/or research on gynecologic cancers. The Board will provide expert advice and assistance to the organization on matters of medical importance.

Medical Advisory Board (as of May 15, 2009)

- Margaret N. Alexander, M.D.
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- James F. Barter, M.D.
- Charles R. Boice, M.D.
- Jonathan A. Cosin, M.D.
- John H. Farley, M.D.
- Hans-B. Krebs, M.D.
- John C. Elkas, M.D.
- Jeffrey Y. Lin, M.D.
- Larry Maxwell, M.D.

McGuire, cont'd from p1.

and McGuire prefers to extend it to four weeks if possible.

He was asked about the experimental medication **Sorafenib**, and said it was very toxic, noting that he agreed with Dr. Gershenson, "What's the matter with stable disease?"

- **Maintenance or "consolidation" therapy** is still controversial. A trial comparing 12 months of standard therapy versus a standard cycle, to extend time to recurrence, was stopped early – so no evidence is yet available.
- **Intraperitoneal therapy** – cannot be used if the cancer is in the lymph nodes, and it is unclear to Dr. McGuire how many cycles of IP therapy are needed to achieve a better outcome than standard therapy. He noted that work is underway to decrease toxicity, and improve catheter placement.
- **Recurrent disease** - a phase III clinical trial, GOG213, is investigating the possible benefit of surgery for recurrence. Benefit is most likely with the likelihood of complete tumor removal. The trial randomizes women to surgery or not, and then all will be randomly assigned to receive carboplatin and paclitaxel or the same therapy plus bevacizumab (Avastin), followed by maintenance therapy with Avastin after the chemotherapy is completed.

Neighborhood Health Champions Bringing Cancer Awareness to DC's Ward 7

Through a grant from the DC Cancer Consortium, Rhonda's Club and In My Sister's Care are partnering with the residents and organizations of Ward 7 in Washington, DC to increase reproductive health and cancer awareness throughout the ward.

The project – Reproductive Cancer Awareness Community Grant – recruited, trained and empowered a grassroots organization, Neighborhood Health Champions, to spread health messages in Ward 7, a much-underserved section of the city with more than 70,000 residents and no hospital.

Each month a learning- and laughter-filled gathering of incredible women, each with the overarching goal of improving the health status of women living in Ward 7 gather to learn, share, and plan the next steps in their campaign for awareness. Due to the overwhelming response, a second training session, May 16th was added. It will take place at First Rock Baptist Church on Alabama Ave.

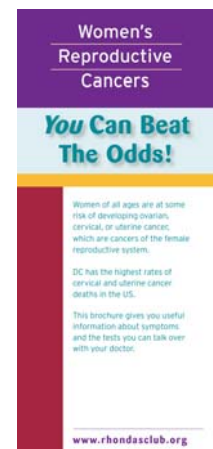
"We are so energized with the positive response from Ward 7," said Mary Jackson Scroggins, Project Coordinator and Ward 7 resident. "Our Champions are reaching out to church leaders, neighborhood organizations, friends and neighbors," added Nadine Cager, Coordinator of the Champions.

Equipped with a new brochure and slide set describing the key symptoms and tests, the Champions are reaching out to their neighbors to improve awareness of cervical, uterine, and ovarian cancer.

The Champions are working on a garden plot to share wellness messages.

Nadine Cager, an energetic, dedicated community worker, is the Project Coordinator for the Champions. Heather Ampofo-Anti is coordinating the Teal Event. Ann Mason and Mary Jackson Scroggins are the Project Managers.

There are lots of ways to help! We would love to have you join us. Contact Ann at 703.856.2365.



The Scoop From Rhonda's Club

Editor: Susan Lowell Butler
 Communications Committee: Ann Mason

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SCIENCE NEWS IN A NUTSHELL...**Dasatinib Plus Standard Chemo Shows Promise for Some Ovarian Cancers**

The addition of a chemotherapeutic drug for leukemia to a standard regimen of two other chemotherapy drugs appears to enhance the response of certain ovarian cancers to treatment, according to a pre-clinical study led by researchers at the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"We determined that the combination of dasatinib (Sprycel) made carboplatin and paclitaxel more effective in cell lines with higher levels of Src expression and Src Pathway deregulation," said Deanne Teoh, MD, a fellow in gynecologic oncology at Duke and lead investigator on this study. The pathway Src (an oncogene) is involved in cell proliferation in certain types of cancers, including some ovarian cancers. That synergistic effect, in which drugs used in combination strengthen each other's usefulness, was not present when low Src expression and low Src Pathway deregulation were present.

"These findings indicate we may be able to direct the use of a targeted therapy like dasatinib based on gene expression pathways in select ovarian cancers," Teoh said.

The results of this study were presented at the American Association for Cancer Research meeting on April 19, 2009, and it is funded by the Prudent Fund and the National Institutes of Health.

"Our ultimate goal is to offer personalized therapy for women with ovarian cancer," said Angeles Secord, MD, a gynecologic oncologist at Duke and senior investigator on the study. "Hopefully we will apply targeted therapies to individual patients and their cancers in order to augment response to treatment while minimizing toxic side effects."

from *EurekaAlert*, April 19, 2009. For background on Src see <http://www.biochemsoctrans.org/bst/030/0011/0300011.pdf>

Drug Combo Helps with Repeat Uterine and Ovarian Cancers

Combined treatment with topotecan (Hycamtin) and docetaxel (Taxotere) is effective for women who have had a return of their uterine or ovarian cancer and have already been treated with other drug combinations, new research shows.

The study, conducted by Dr. Mark Einstein, from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, is the first to evaluate this drug regimen in such patients, and is found to be well-tolerated. Although the study did not feature a comparison group, prior research has shown that treatment responses in these types of patients are usually much worse than seen here and with more severe side effects.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!**

OGCC's Survivors Teaching Students Program brings trained ovarian cancer survivors and caregivers to speak with medical students throughout the Greater Washington and Baltimore area.

The next training class is on June 6.

For more information and to discuss the program, please contact Fran Stolusky at warren.fran@verizon.net or call 301.299.9369.

We Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends...

Like many all-volunteer organizations, OGCC/Rhonda's Club relies on capable volunteers like **you** to help us fulfill our mission and execute our many programs. Right now we need volunteer help as follows:

- **Fundraising** -- do you have some fundraising skills – and a little time to advise Rhonda's Club on ways to improve our capabilities in this critical area? If so, we need you!
- **Outreach** – We need volunteers to get out awareness messages.
- **Join the Ward 7 Event Committee** – Rhonda's Club Teal Event Committee will turn the Ward 7 Teal in September 2009 as part of our Ward 7 Project. If you have party planning skills, we can use your talent. Contact Ann Mason at 703.856.2365.

To learn more about these needs and to volunteer, please contact Paige Whitaker at Paige88@gmail.com. You'll be joining a great group of women who are committed to working to spread symptom awareness and to find a cure for ovarian and gynecologic cancers!

Topotecan and docetaxel are commonly used to treat recurrent gynecologic cancers, but not in this combination. This study featured 15 women with recurrent ovarian cancer, 9 with recurrent uterine cancer and 3 with cancer of the tissue lining the inside of the abdomen. All had been treated previously with chemotherapy regimens, and most had had two such prior regimens.

Participants received topotecan and docetaxel on a weekly basis for three weeks at a time. They then had a 1-week rest period, before repeating the process. This was done six times unless the patient died or experienced a severe side effect. During a total of 86 treatment cycles, seven severe side effects occurred. However, nearly all the patients were able to continue treatment.

[from Reuters, reporting on *Gynecologic Oncology*, April 21, 2009 online]

Events You Will Not Want To Miss!

12th Annual Ovarian Cancer National Alliance Annual Conference

July 6-8 – Conference at the Washington DC Omni Shoreham Hotel

July 9 – Lobby Day

July 10 – Partner Member Summit

For information and registration:

www.ovariancancer.org/conference/2009



Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Movement Weekend – Nov. 6-9, Washington DC!

Those of you attending our special program on June 8 will get a “sneak preview” from Dr. Larry Maxwell, the guiding light behind this spectacular November weekend – but for everyone else, here’s what the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation has planned:

Nov. 6 – CME courses for physicians

Nov. 7 – **Three all-day concurrent survivor education courses** will be held for survivors of ovarian, cervical and endometrial cancers, from 9 am until 4 pm, at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Washington, DC. At 4 pm, a reception for all participants will be held. These courses are free, but registration is required: go to www.wcn.org for more information.

Nov. 8 – **Half Marathon and 5K Races** through the streets of Washington, DC. There will be an SGO/GCF Surgeons Team running...and with a little luck and your help, a OGCC/Rhonda’s Club team, too! There will be lots of fun following the race, especially listening to Dr. Maxwell’s all-gyn onc band, N.E.D.!

Learn more about the race at www.gfrace.com.

Rhonda’s Club is working with Dr. Maxwell and we’ll be full participants in this spectacular event on behalf of gynecologic cancers. We’ll be providing you with more details as planning progresses.

If you have an interest in participating in a running team, contact Paige Walker at 703.346.3893.

Special Thanks....

It’s always a pleasure to thank volunteers and colleagues for helping to advance the work of OGCC/Rhonda’s Club:

- **Greg Merrill** – for facilitating our Board’s 2009 annual planning meeting
- **Erika Lunder** for volunteering to become our new tax preparer and bookkeeper!
- **Julie Krebs-Markrich** and **Reed Smith, LLP** – this fine law firm has agreed to make OGCC/Rhonda’s Club their pro bono client!
- **The Odd Fellows of Grand Lodge #6 in New Jersey** – for holding a successful Valentine’s Day Dance to benefit OGCC/Rhonda’s Club
- **Abby Strunk** – the wonderful leader of our April 19 Yoga Class, and a new member of our Fundraising Committee
- **Patricia Teck** and **Ellen Gay**, members of the Survivor Education Committee, who helped with our March program with Dr. McGuire
- **Ruth Melser** – a new Fundraising Committee volunteer
- **Heather Ampoto-Anti**, coordinator for the Teal Event Day in Ward 7 and **Nadine Cager**, coordinator of the Ward 7 Neighborhood Health Champions.

About Us

OGCC/Rhonda’s Club was founded in 1997 by ovarian and gynecologic cancer survivors.

Mission

OGCC/Rhonda’s Club works so that all gynecologic cancers will be diagnosed at early stages, and women will have access to quality medical information and care and ultimately, a cure.

Our programs include:

- Teal Class: Survivors Training Students**
- Survivor Education**
- Symptom Awareness / Public Outreach**

The Scoop From Rhonda’s Club

Ovarian & Gynecologic Cancer Coalition/Rhonda’s Club
 P.O. Box 12504, Arlington VA 22219
 (703) 346-3893
www.cancer-ovarian.org

OGCC/Rhonda’s Club is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) public charity.

We are a founding and active partner-member of the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance.

Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

OGCC’s Tax Identification Number is 54-2004729

OGCC/Rhonda’s Club Board

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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