

From the Editor

Prostate Cancer Standards— Are Trial Results Affecting Practice?



Debu Tripathy

Debu Tripathy, MD
Editor-in-Chief

The title of this commentary may sound critical or impart a tone of disappointment. However, it is, in part, a result of more rapid output from clinical trials and the introduction of new drugs or older drugs in a different setting. In the review of new therapeutic paradigms for advanced prostate cancer by Li et al in this issue of *The American Journal of Hematology/Oncology*®, this phenomenon is nicely illustrated. In the past few years, we have seen advances in all the therapeutic categories for prostate cancer—antandrogen, cytotoxic, and bone-directed therapy, along with early-phase trials with PARP inhibitors and immunotherapy. The paradox of rapid progress is that successful trials of different designs leave uncertainty regarding which

of several strategies is optimal. Additionally, as standards for first-line therapy change, interpretation of later-line trials becomes murky because the populations no longer reflect subjects from past studies in terms of prior treatments.

As pointed out in this article, the use of sequential androgen-targeting agents has become popular owing to fewer toxicities and the numerous new agents available in this category. However, there is little evidence demonstrating whether this strategy is effective and, if it is, which of the many permutations of sequence is best. While there is likely some degree of cross-resistance, this is not complete, yet the few available data suggest that the activity is modest. The timing of bone-targeted radium-223 that not only improves bone pain but has an overall anti-tumor effect, with improvement in survival and the role of specific concomitant androgen-directed therapies (and eventually in clinical trials with chemotherapy) also needs further investigation to be optimally used in the clinic.

The most recent set of advances have come in the initial treatment of metastatic prostate cancer. Three pivotal trials testing different partners with androgen deprivation therapy—namely docetaxel, enzalutamide, and abiraterone—have shown survival advantages that appear to be similar, although different follow-up times and endpoints make comparisons difficult. Of course, cross-trial comparisons must be viewed cautiously even when the populations and methods/parameters are comparable. There is considerable debate over whether there are specific factors that would favor the use of chemotherapy in the front line—so far, this has not been adopted extensively. All said, these important milestones are calling for even more trials so that effects on practice, such as therapy choices after progression, can be better determined. We are seeing this same challenge in other tumor types with the reporting of landmark studies. It may be time to design trials that also designate the next line of therapy—these likely would not be industry-supported trials, so cooperative groups and other consortia are beginning to discuss these strategies.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-Chief

Debu Tripathy, MD
Professor and Chair
Department of Breast Medical Oncology
The University of Texas
MD Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, TX

Associate Editor

Jason J. Luke, MD, FACP
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL

**Editorial Director
Oncology Specialty Group**
Silas Inman

Managing Editor

Anthony Berberabe, MPH
aberberabe@mjhassoc.com

Senior Art Director
Melissa Feinen

Editorial Offices

Physicians' Education Resource®, LLC
2 Clarke Drive, Cranbury, NJ 08512
(609) 378-3701



President

Phil Talamo, CHCP

Vice President, Medical Affairs

Michael Perlmutter, PharmD, MS

General Manager

Michael Ball



Michael J. Hennessy Associates, Inc.

CORPORATE OFFICERS

Chairman and CEO

Michael J. Hennessy, Sr

Vice Chairman

Jack Lepping

President

Mike Hennessy, Jr

Chief Financial Officer

Neil Glasser, CPA/CFE

**Executive Vice President,
Oncology Professional Relations**
Donna Short

Chief Marketing Officer
Warren Dardine

Chief Digital Strategy Officer
Steve Ennen

**Vice President of Editorial Services
and Production**
Kerrie Keegan

Vice President of Digital Media
Jung Kim

Chief Creative Officer
Jeff Brown

Vice President, Live Events
Tom Tolve

Director of Human Resources
Shari Lundenberg