

Chairman's Letter



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This issue of *The American Journal of Hematology/Oncology*[®] offers an in-depth look at the latest advances in immunotherapies and HER2-targeted therapies in colorectal, lung, and breast cancers, and original research about the knowledge and attitudes of women in Lebanon about breast self-examination (BSE) and clinical breast examination (CBE).

Despite the introduction of bevacizumab (Avastin) and cetuximab (Erbix) as targeted treatment options in colorectal cancer in the early 2000s, over the past 15 years, the mainstay treatment option is still fluorouracil-based cytotoxic chemotherapy. However, with the advent of immunotherapies, checkpoint inhibitors offer new options for treatment, according to “Advances in Immunotherapy in the Treatment of Colorectal Cancer.” Birendra KC, MD, and colleagues discuss the underlying molecular mechanisms and review published and ongoing clinical trials with immunotherapy in treatment of colorectal cancer.

In “Raising the Therapeutic Index for HER2-Targeted Therapy: Can We Safely Omit Anthracyclines in the Adjuvant Setting?” authors Kelly E. McCann, MD, PhD, and Sara A. Hurvitz, MD, note the dramatic improvements in outcomes for patients with HER2-positive breast cancer. Yet, the concurrent cytotoxic chemotherapy regimen is still debatable. Their article focuses on cardiac toxicities associated with concurrent use of anthracycline with trastuzumab (Herceptin) in the adjuvant setting.

The effect of immunotherapy in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) has dramatically changed the treatment options available for clinicians and patients. Jeffrey Zweig, MD, and Sukhmani K. Padda, MD, note the rising role of pembrolizumab (Keytruda) for use in the first-line setting as a monotherapy and—with FDA-accelerated approval—in combination with carboplatin-pemetrexed chemotherapy. Could this hasten the demise of platinum-based therapy for patients with NSCLC? Not just yet, according to their article, “Frontline Immunotherapy in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer: For Which Patients Is Platinum Passé?”

The last manuscript, an original research study, “Knowledge, Practices, and Attitudes of Women Toward Breast Cancer in Lebanon,” presents the first national survey to study Lebanese women’s knowledge of and attitudes toward breast cancer screening, and of their practice of BSE, CBE, and mammography. Myrna A. A. Doumit, PhD, MPH, BSN, and colleagues analyze the perceived barriers that women experience and that prevent them from implementing these breast health strategies.

In the CME article this month, Leora Horn, MD, MSc, associate professor of medicine in hematology and oncology at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, discusses the use of immune checkpoint inhibitors of the PD-1/PD-L1 pathway in the treatment of NSCLC. Dr Horn discusses groundbreaking trials that led to the approval of atezolizumab (Tecentriq), pembrolizumab, and other practice-changing agents. The future of combinations with other therapies and ongoing trials are also discussed.

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