PRODUCT UPDATE

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Pemetrexed Approved for Use With Cisplatin for Treatment of Mesothelioma

Pemetrexed (Alimta®, Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis, IN) is a new cancer agent for the treatment of malignant mesothelioma. Pemetrexed blocks three enzyme targets that are necessary for cancer cells to grow and divide. In a pivotal phase III trial (N = 448), pemetrexed combined with cisplatin demonstrated an overall survival increase of 30% compared to cisplatin alone. In addition, 50.3% of patients were living one year after treatment compared to 38% receiving cisplatin alone. Complete description of the trial and results can be found in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* (Vol. 21, pp. 2636–2644).

Adverse effects of pemetrexed include pancytopenia, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, diarrhea, skin rash, and pain. Patients low in some essential vitamins were found to have more toxic side effects; therefore, all patients on pemetrexed also must receive daily doses of folic acid and periodic intramuscular doses of B_{12}. Pemetrexed has potential interactions with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Patients with renal impairment should not receive pemetrexed.

Pemetrexed also is being investigated for use in non-small cell lung cancer as well as other solid tumors. For full prescribing information, visit www.alimta.com or call 800-545-5979.

Oxaliplatin Approved for First-Line Treatment of Advanced Colorectal Cancer

Oxaliplatin (Eloxatin™, Sanofi-Synthelabo Inc., Malvern, PA), in combination with infusional 5-fluorouracil and leucovorin (5-FU/LV), now is indicated for first- and second-line treatment of advanced carcinoma of the colon or rectum. This new indication comes after the completion of a multicenter, randomized, open-label, clinical trial. Patients in the oxaliplatin with 5FU/LV group had significantly longer median survival, longer time to tumor progression, and a significantly greater response rate. Compared to patients treated with irinotecan plus 5FU/LV, the oxaliplatin with 5FU/LV group had a lower incidence of grades 3–4 gastrointestinal toxicity and febrile neutropenia but higher incidences of grades 3–4 paresthesia and neutropenia. For more information, call 877-4ELOXATIN or visit www.eloxatin.com.

Cetuximab Also Approved for Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

Cetuximab (Erbitux™, ImClone Systems Inc., New York, NY, and Bristol-Myers Squibb, New York, NY) is a new therapeutic monoclonal antibody that has been approved for use with irinotecan to treat patients with epidermal growth factor receptor- (EGFR-) expressing metastatic colorectal cancer who are refractory to irinotecan-based chemotherapy and for use as a single agent in the treatment of patients with EGFR-expressing metastatic colorectal who are intolerant to irinotecan-based therapy. Cetuximab binds to EGFRs in normal and tumor cells and inhibits the binding of epidermal growth factors, thereby preventing cell growth. EGFR is expressed in normal and tumor cells and is overexpressed in many human cancers, including those of the colon and rectum.

Adverse effects of cetuximab may include severe infusion reactions, interstitial lung disease, dermatologic toxicities, fever, sepsis, kidney failure, pulmonary embolus, dehydration, and diarrhea. Additional adverse effects seen in cetuximab in combination with irinotecan include rash, asthenia or malaise, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, and constipation. Patients should be tested for EGFR expression to determine whether cetuximab is appropriate. Full prescribing information is available at www.erbitux.com.

New Drug Approved for Treatment of Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

Bevacizumab (Avastin™, Genentech Inc., South San Francisco, CA) has been given U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for the treatment of previously untreated metastatic colorectal cancer, in combination with 5-fluorouracil-based chemotherapy. Bevacizumab is the first approved monoclonal antibody that inhibits angiogenesis, thereby slowing tumor growth and metastasis. In a large, placebo-controlled, randomized study, patients who were treated with bevacizumab and irinotecan, 5-fluorouracil, and leucovorin (IFL) survived, on average, five months longer than those who received IFL alone.

The most common severe side effects found with bevacizumab are hypertension, nosebleeds, and asymptomatic proteinuria. Uncommon serious side effects include gastrointestinal perforations and wound healing complications. For more information, visit www.avastin.com or www.gene.com or call 650-225-7739.

NEW PRODUCTS

Avon Breast Cancer Crusade Offers Two New Products

Avon (New York, NY) has announced two new products that will raise funds for breast cancer research, education, screening and diagnosis, treatment, and support services with a focus on reaching the medically underserved. The Pink Ribbon necklace and locket key chain can be purchased by calling 800-FOR-AVON or by visiting www.avonfoundation.org. The necklace is priced at $7.50 and the key chain at $5.

New Ambulatory Infusion Pumps Are Available

Sorenson Medical (West Jordan, UT) has announced the availability of two new ambulatory infusion pumps: the ambIT™ continuous infusion pump and the ambIT intermittent infusion pump. These pumps are small, lightweight, battery-operated, and simple to program. The pumps have occlusion alarms and free-flow protection that meets standards of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations standards and International Electrotechnical Commission. The cost of the ambIT pumps is less than most other multitherapy pumps. These small pumps also store history reports on infusion activity for easy charting and accommodate any collapsible fluid bag up to 1,000 ml. For more information, visit www.sorensonmedical.com.

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