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NCCN Task Force: Transfusion and Iron Overload in Patients With Myelodysplastic Syndromes

In October 2009, NCCN convened a multidisciplinary task force to critically review the evidence for iron chelation and the rationale for the treatment of transfusional iron overload in patients with myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS). The task force was charged with addressing issues related to tissue iron toxicity; the role of MRI in assessing iron overload; the rationale and role of treating transfusional iron overload in patients with MDS; and the impact of iron overload on bone marrow transplantation.

A task force report summarizing the background data and ensuing discussion from the NCCN Task Force meeting on transfusional iron overload in MDS is now available on the JNCCN Web site at JNCCN.org and the NCCN Web site at NCCN.org/JNCCN/supplements.asp.

New Service Offers Timely Access to Updates in NCCN Guidelines™ & NCCN Compendium

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) announces the launch of NCCN Flash Updates, a new service that provides subscribers with e-mail notification when updates are published to the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology and NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium.

All registered users of NCCN.org recently received a complimentary preview of an NCCN Flash Updates notifying them that the NCCN Guidelines for Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma (MPM) was published as an addition to the Complete Library of NCCN Guidelines. The NCCN Flash Update included recommended treatment options for patients with MPM as well as first-line therapy regimens.

“The NCCN Guidelines are updated on a continual basis as new research data and clinical evidence emerge. Therefore, it is imperative that clinicians receive timely notice of updates so that they can make more informed treatment decisions for their patients,” said William T. McGivney, PhD, CEO of NCCN. “Further, individuals who must be aware of NCCN’s latest recommendations for policy, consulting or analytic purposes can receive these update notifications. NCCN Flash Updates is another example of NCCN’s ability to deliver innovative offerings that simplify access to the latest expert recommendations in cancer care.”

In a recent survey of NCCN Guidelines users, it was reported that nearly 90 percent of physician respondents use the NCCN Guidelines in their decision-making about patient care.

In addition to the new NCCN Guidelines for Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma, a new chapter for malignant pleural mesothelioma has also been added to the NCCN Compendium.

Mesothelioma is a rare cancer that is estimated to occur in about 2,500 people in the United States every year. The disease is deadly and difficult to treat; median overall survival is approximately one year.

To subscribe to NCCN Flash Updates or for additional information, visit NCCN.org.
UnitedHealth Launches Cancer Care Registry

A division of UnitedHealth Group Inc. has launched a new cancer care registry, a database that combines clinical and claims data to gauge the quality of cancer patient care.

The registry, called Oncology Care Analysis, was launched on February 9, 2010, by UnitedHealthcare.

It includes data from more than 2,600 oncologists and 8,600 patients with breast, colon or lung cancer. The company creates an electronic report for oncologists about specific patients that compares their treatment to existing guidelines developed by an alliance of 21 cancer centers that called the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN).

The individual reports are designed to help improve the quality of cancer care and lead to better outcomes, according to a UnitedHealth press release.

The report may include data about how well a patient is complying with their medications or it might contain important information about procedures performed by other specialists, including radiation oncologists and surgeons.

Ingenix, UnitedHealth Group’s health information, technology and consulting company, worked in collaboration with UnitedHealthcare and the NCCN to develop the database. Cancer costs UnitedHealth about $2.5 billion per year, making it the company’s third most expensive disease, according to a story in the Wall Street Journal.

UnitedHealth (NYSE: UNH) has similar programs that track other treatments besides cancer, including one targeted at primary care physicians.

NCCN Publishes New NCCN Guidelines™ for Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma (MPM)

The NCCN announces the launch of new NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology for malignant pleural mesothelioma (MPM). A new chapter for mesothelioma has also been added to the NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium.

Mesothelioma is a rare cancer that is estimated to occur in about 2,500 people in the United States every year. The disease is deadly and difficult to treat; median overall survival is only about 1 year.

The NCCN Guidelines—available as Version 1.2010—recommend that patients with MPM be managed by a multidisciplinary team with experience in MPM. Treatment options for patients with MPM include surgery, radiation therapy (RT), and/or chemotherapy; select patients (clinical stages II–III, medically operable, performance status 0) are candidates for multimodality therapy.

Recommended regimens for first-line therapy include cisplatin and pemetrexed (category 1 recommendation). Other regimens for first-line therapy are pemetrexed and carboplatin, gemcitabine and cisplatin, pemetrexed as a single agent, and vinorelbine as a single agent.

For the complete updated versions of the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology and the NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium, please visit NCCN.org.