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Our Next Meeting: Targeted Immunotherapies for Prostate Cancer



At our May meeting, Dr. Benjamin Esparaz will be speaking to us about targeted immunotherapies and new chemotherapies in prostate cancer. Dr. Esparaz has been a medical oncologist with Cancer Care Specialists of Central Illinois, S.C., since 1989, and is one of its primary founders.

In addition to his practice with CCSCI, Dr. Esparaz has been Medical Director of the St. John's Hospice Program since 1996. He currently serves as Co-Investigator for the Central Illinois Community Clinical Oncology Program and serves on several medical committees. Please come and help us welcome Dr. Esparaz at our May meeting!

Upcoming Speakers:

June: David J. Yu, M.D.
Understanding the role of Hospitalists

July: Cost of developing prescription drugs, TAPS Pharmaceutical

August: Dr. Elizabeth Jeffery, Dept. of Food Science & Human Nutrition, University of Chicago

Next Meeting: May 22nd, 4:30 p.m. **Location:** 2884 N. Monroe St.
Please enter on the north side of the Cancer Care Specialists of Central Illinois building.

Missed a meeting?

All of our meetings are taped and available on VHS for our members to borrow.

April Highlights: Understanding Medical Studies

In April, we welcomed Dave Marshall and Myrrh Hector as our speakers.

They spoke about cancer clinical trials. Some of the things we learned were:

- Clinical trials are **research studies** with groups of people. These studies are the only way we can find new treatments for diseases like cancer.
- Only about **5% of all adults** with cancer participate in clinical trials. This rate is even lower among minorities, the elderly, and people with low incomes.
- People in treatment cancer clinical trials are not treated like “guinea pigs.” They never get a placebo (sugar pill) instead of appropriate treatment.
- Clinical trials are **not for everyone**. Each study has different rules about who can join.
- **Our community** has many clinical trials open right now.



Education Network to
Advance Cancer Clinical
Trials

A government advisory panel backed a new biotech vaccine for treating advanced prostate cancer March 29th, saying the treatment showed limited evidence of prolonging life in seriously ill patients. In a 13-4 vote, the Food and Drug Administration advisors backed Dendreon Corp's. claim that Provenge®, its new generation cellular treatment, can extend survival in men who no longer respond to hormone treatment. Dendreon touted the treatment as the first cellular therapy against cancer. To undergo treatment, patients have white blood cells removed and treated with immune agents. The cells are then reintroduced back into the body. theory, allows them to mount an immune response against cancer cells. A pair of studies suggested Provenge may slow by one to two weeks the progression of prostate cancer in men whose cancer no longer responds to treatment with hormones. Men who used the treatment also showed some evidence of living longer than those who took a placebo. In one trial men who got active treatment lived an average of 3.3 months longer. In another, they lived four-and-a-half months longer. Experts criticized the studies for enrolling only about 100 to 130 patients, a relatively small number that can limit scientists' ability to interpret results. Several experts said they were uneasy about supporting the treatment because it showed only marginal evidence of benefit. But a majority recommended approval anyway, citing scant options available to advanced prostate cancer patients, many of whom are facing a terminal illness. Despite the vote, several experts said they were unconvinced that Dendreon had established Provenge's effectiveness. Many backed the treatment anyway when FDA officials asked them to vote only on whether evidence was "substantial."

But panelists urged FDA to base its final decision largely on the results of a third study designed to test whether Provenge improves survival in more than 400 patients. Several patients testified before the committee about the need for more therapies, even ones of questionable benefit. Patients "are pleading for something other than the one drug that's been approved in the last 30 years," said Jim Kiefert, chairman of Us Too.



Resources

Us TOO International, Inc.
Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network
5003 Fairview Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60515 (USA)
Phone: (630) 795-1002
Fax: (630) 795-1602
PCa Support Hotline: (800) 80-Us TOO (800-808-7866)
Web: www.ustoo.com

American Cancer Society
Phone: 1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345)
Web: www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service: 1-800-4-Cancer
Write to: (1-800-422-6237)
NCI Public Inquiries Office
6116 Executive Boulevard
Room 3036A
Bethesda, MD 20892-8322
Web: www.cancer.gov

Our meetings provide a forum in which we can discuss problems and anxieties related to prostate cancer. In addition, the group serves as a resource of medical information for all participants. We strive to maintain a positive and supportive attitude, have an enjoyable time, and encourage each other as we take our walk on the prostate cancer journey. If you have a concern between meetings, seek us out for emotional support or a listening ear.

The US TOO newsletter is distributed to all newly diagnosed prostate cancer patients. For questions or to add or delete your name from our mailing list, please call (217) 876-2370 or e-mail nikkid@dmhhs.org. The US TOO newsletters are also available on DMH'S website <http://www.dmhcares.org>. Click on 'Cancer Care Institute', and then click on 'Support Groups'.

National Cancer Survivor's Day

Decatur Memorial Hospital, Cancer Care Specialists of Central Illinois, and St. Mary's Hospital will be hosting a celebration for National Cancer Survivor's Day on Sunday, June 3rd, at the Main Pavilion at Fairview Park from 12-2:30.

Ellen and Doug Zemke, a local cancer survivor and spouse, will be our featured speakers. A catered lunch will be served, and entertainment will be provided by local band Stranger than Fiction. If you'd like to attend this event, please call 876-6620 to RSVP by June 1st.