Psycho-oncology V: Psychosocial Factors in Cancer Risk and Survival, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center New York City, New York, 2–4 October 1993

The Psychiatry Service of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, the European School of Oncology, the American Italian Foundation for Cancer Research, the International Psycho-oncology Society and the American Society of Psychiatric Oncology and AIDS, sponsored a psycho-oncology update in New York City on 2–4 October. The conference, entitled Psycho-oncology V: Psychosocial Factors in Cancer Risk and Survival, was attended by nearly 300 delegates representing approximately 20 countries spanning North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. The meeting was composed of eight separate sessions over the 3 days. The first 2 days of the conference were organized with plenary lectures in the morning, followed by four simultaneous symposia in the afternoon. The 3rd day also was composed of plenary lectures in the morning followed by a special session on developing a research agenda focusing upon funding opportunities for psycho-oncology research in the afternoon, in which representatives of special-interest and governmental organizations reported on their funding agenda for the coming years.

The conference was opened by Dr. Jimmie Holland, Chief of the Psychiatry Service of Memorial Sloan Kettering, who welcomed the international audience and provided them with a symposium overview.

Session one, entitled “Tobacco-related neoplasms: models for integration of psychological social and behavioral factors” was chaired by Drs. William Cahan and Paul Jacobsen. Dr. Cahan opened this section with an overview of tobacco and cancer. Dr. Cahan is a retired thoracic surgeon who has spent 51 years at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Throughout his career, Dr. Cahan has been an advocate for smoking cessation, both on the level of the individual patient and nationally. Mr. David Krogh followed Dr. Cahan with a lecture entitled “Why do people smoke?”. Mr. Krogh, the author of Smoking: the artificial passion, provided an elegant summary of research on motivational, behavioral and physiological factors that influence smoking behaviors. Dr. Stimson P. Schantz followed Mr. Krogh with a lecture on the Biology of head and neck neoplasms: opportunities for chemoprevention”. Dr. Schantz’s lecture focused upon developments in chemoprevention strategies and outlined their applicability throughout the course of head and neck cancers. Dr. Ellen Gritz then followed with a lecture entitled “Behavioral and psychological aspects of smoking cessation: healthy individuals and patients with cancer”, in which Dr. Gritz summarized her extensive research into the psychological aspects of successful and unsuccessful smoking cessation. Dr. Gritz was followed by Mr. Michael Pertschuk, an attorney, who discussed “The role of the health professional as policy advocate”. The session provided an excellent multi-disciplinary look at the psychological, physiological and political implications of smoking and smoking cessation, highlighting the role of psycho-social and mental health professionals in this complicated health problem.

Following lunch, Dr. Mary Claire King, of the University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health, gave a special lecture entitled “Genetic risk and breast cancer: future implications”, a stimulating discussion that served to update the audience about new and coming developments in the area of understanding the genetic aspects of breast cancer risk and highlight the role of psycho-social professionals in managing the psychological factors inherent in risk notification.

The afternoon sessions were composed of four simultaneous symposia that gave those present an opportunity to attend a detailed session in areas of importance to psycho-oncologists. The first symposium, entitled “Biopsychosocial approaches to smoking cessation” was chaired by Dr. Jamie Ostroff. This session allowed for the continuation and further development of the morning session on tobacco-related neoplasms. In addition to the morning plenary speakers, the afternoon symposium included Dr. Jon Kern, speaking about smoking cessation programs, Dr. Joseph Chernier, who talked about community-based interventions for smoking cessation and prevention, Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin, who discussed his work on primary prevention through school-based programs and Dr. John R. Hughes, who spoke about combined pharmacologic treatments for nicotine addiction.

The second symposium of the afternoon was chaired by Dr. Kathryn M. Kash, on “Psychosocial issues in women at genetic risk for breast cancer”, which included discussions by Dr. Mary Clarice King: “How close are we to finding the gene for breast cancer?” and Dr. Caryn Lerman: “The impact of fear of breast cancer on women’s lives”. Dr. Kash discussed her own work in “Psychosocial interventions for women at genetic risk for breast cancer” and Dr. Mary Jane Massie discussed the controversial issue: “Prophylactic mastectomy
for women at high risk for breast cancer: a reasonable treatment?". Dr. Massie has extensive experience in evaluating women who consider prophylactic mastectomy as a treatment option in the face of profound family histories of the disease.

The third symposium covered the area of "Pain and symptom assessment and management", chaired by Dr. Steven D. Passik. The session included Dr. Russell K. Portenoy, speaking about his work in the development and validation of the Memorial Symptom Assessment Scale. Dr. Passik discussed "Psychological assessment and management of cancer Patients with Pain" covering a range of assessment issues including his own work on the assessment of addiction in cancer patients. Dr. William S. Breitbart discussed "Psychiatric assessment and psycho-pharmacologic interventions" including the use of psychotropic adjuvants for pain and a range of distressing physical symptoms. Following these three lectures, a series of briefer presentations by Nessa Coyle, Sherry R. Schachter, Stephanie Vitalano, and Terry Altilio applied pain and symptom assessment and management techniques to special populations, such as the dying patient at home with pain and psychiatric complications and the dying child at home. Ms. Altilio presented a case summary that highlighted the role of the social worker in a cancer pain service.

The last symposium of the day was entitled, "Quality of life: assessment and clinical implications" and chaired by Dr. Alice Kornblith. This session included Dr. Hanneke de Haes on her work on “Quality of life assessment and decision making”. Dr. Kornblith discussing her own experience and research in the Cancer and Leukemia Group B, looking at "Quality of life research in clinical trials", and Dr. Rapkin discussing "Patient-centered quality of life assessment", a new and interesting line of research inquiry that Dr. Rapkin has applied to AIDS patients and is now working on in the oncology population.

The day ended with the first of two poster sessions and wine and cheese receptions that marked the end of the first and second days of the conference. Over 108 posters were displayed over the course of the 2 days. On each day 8 posters were acknowledged as deserving a special citation, and were displayed in a special exhibition area, representing promising new avenues of empirical study. The special citations were awarded by the members of the scientific committee of the conference organizing group.

The second day of the conference began with a morning session entitled "Social ties, social support and cancer mortality" chaired by Dr. Holland. It began with the first of three plenary lectures, given by Dr. George Kaplan entitled "Social structure and the natural history of cancer". Dr. Kaplan discussed his extensive work in the area of understanding aspects of socioeconomic status, social support and other social factors and their influence on the course of cancer, Dr. Elizabeth Maunsell then spoke about "Social support and survival of women with breast cancer", discussing her work in Montreal, looking at the interplay of social support and the survivability of breast cancer. Dr. Maunsell was selected as the recipient of the First International Psycho-Oncology Society Young Investigator Award for her work in this area. The award was presented over lunch, during a special session later that afternoon. Dr. Sheldon A. Cohen completed the morning session describing his work on "Stress, social support and immune function: implications for cancer". Dr. Cohen has worked extensively in the area of psycho-neuroimmunology and drew some implications from his work on susceptibility to viral illness, outlining its implications for the understanding of cancer.

A lunchtime workshop entitled "Training the next generation" was led by Dr. William S. Breitbart of Memorial Sloan Kettering. The workshop included presentations by Dr. Massie, Dr. Darius Razavi and Dr. Breitbart and discussion involved participants from three different disciplines: Dr. Passik from psychology, Ms. Lissa Parsonnet from social work and Ms. Mary Laymen-Goldstein from nursing, with the common focus of addressing training issues for the future of psycho-oncology. In addition, Dr. Holland awarded the Arthur M. Sutherland Award during lunch to Dr. Ned Kassem of the Mass General Hospital. The Sutherland Award was granted at the prior Psycho-Oncology Updates sponsored by Memorial Sloan Kettering and has been awarded to pioneers in the field of consultation liaison psychiatry and psycho-oncology. Dr. Kassem has worked for many years in the understanding of the psychological aspects of working with dying patients and is clearly recognized as a pioneer in this area. Dr. Maunsell also was presented with her Young Investigator Award at this ceremony.

As on the first day of the conference, the second day included four simultaneous symposia, Dr. Holland led one of these symposia entitled "Debating research issues in social ties, social support and cancer mortality". The morning lecturers were joined by Dr. Dana Bovbjerg who discussed his work in psychoneuroimmunology research. This session allowed the audience an opportunity to discuss aspects of social support and social ties and mortality and future research directions with the morning plenary speakers and to develop these ideas, further.

Dr. Passik chaired the second symposium entitled "Family and caregiver interventions". This session was devoted to some new