

PRESS RELEASE

Thyroid cancer – Targeted therapy
Publication in the New England Journal of Medicine

LENVATINIB, A NEW TARGETED THERAPY EFFECTIVE IN THE TREATMENT OF THYROID CANCER REFRACTORY TO RADIOACTIVE IODINE.

Prof. Martin Schlumberger, Head of the Department of Nuclear Medicine and Endocrine Oncology at Gustave Roussy, is the first author of an International multicentric study published in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine on the 12th of February.

This clinical trial has shown that a new targeted therapy, lenvatinib, gives rise to major benefits in patients suffering from differentiated advanced thyroid cancer and refractory to iodine-131 (RR-DTC). Lenvatinib improves progression-free survival and gives rise to a significant reduction in tumour mass in two thirds of patients. Its toxicity is controlled through a reduction in dosage and by symptomatic treatment.

Up until 2010, there was no solution for the treatment of patients suffering from this form of thyroid cancer which represents between 5 and 15% of patients and in whom life expectancy was at best only a few years. Today, according to Prof. Martin Schlumberger, “given the results of this trial, lenvatinib, may become the standard treatment for patients resistant to iodine-131.”

The objective of this phase III, randomised, double blind, placebo controlled trial (SELECT trial) was to compare progression-free survival in individuals suffering from a RR-DTC and presenting with radiographic signs of disease progression during the 13 months prior to inclusion. The results of this study were presented at the 50th ASCO Congress in June 2014. Lenvatinib is an inhibitor of tyrosine kinases (VEGFR-3, FGFR 1-4, PDGFR β , KIT, and RET).

// A clear-cut improvement in progression-free survival

This study was carried out in over 100 centres in Europe, in North and in South America and in Asia. The study included 392 patients of which 261 received lenvatinib (24mg/day) and 136 a placebo.

The results show a median progression-free survival of 18.3 months on lenvatinib versus 3.8 months on placebo. This improvement is considerable and markedly greater than that seen with other medicines. Moreover, 65% of treated patients, witnessed a significant

regression in their tumour and the tumour disappeared in several patients. The same benefits were observed in patients already treated with another kinases inhibitor which demonstrate the absence of cross-resistance to this drugs. The majority of tumour responses occurred rapidly during the two months following the onset of treatment.

Adverse effects were seen, the five commonest ones being hypertension (68%), diarrhea (59%), a loss of appetite (50%), weight loss (46%) and nausea (41%). Moreover, 20 patients died during treatment with lenvatinib, but the majority of these deaths were linked to disease progression. The dose of lenvatinib had to be reduced in 78% of patients without nevertheless reducing the benefits of treatment and 15% of patients stopped their treatment.

/ About Gustave Roussy

Gustave Roussy, the first comprehensive cancer centre in Europe, is a global centre of expertise in the fight against cancer wholly dedicated to patients. It brings together, on the same site, 3,000 professionals, the aim of which is care, research and training.

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