SIOG NR report 2015

Australia

The activities of the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA) geriatric oncology group continue steadily.

COSA provide secretariat support for a core group of committed clinicians. COSA is a multidisciplinary organisation and the diversity of membership of the geriatric oncology group reflects this.

Research

This year saw the publication of the national audit of Geriatric Assessment in Australian oncology clinics1. The results were not surprising but did reveal the geriatric assessment items that oncologists are currently most interested in when they are looking after older adults with cancer.

Continuing the research agenda, the COSA group is conducting a study into the service provision of cancer care in older adults. A survey of medical oncologists is currently underway. The aim of the survey is to explore attitudes towards geriatric oncology services and to determine the value that these services hold to the medical oncology community. A series of qualitative interviews is then planned to ask clinicians in centres with geriatric oncology services what they find useful about those services.

Research has not been limited to the members of the COSA group. For example the work of Parakh and colleagues on the management of older adults with colorectal cancer in Australia has recently been accepted for publication in the JGO2. The work of Patsy Yates and Alexandra McCarthy and colleagues in Queensland also needs to be mentioned3.

Education

There has been ever-increasing interest in cancer in the older adult from clinicians, government agencies and professional groups. Members of the COSA group have been asked to give presentations at number of forums throughout the year.

Highlights include

1. UICC cancer congress in November 2014 in Melbourne – Combined session with MASCC.
2. Presentation to the Gynecological Cancer Intergroup (GCIG) Symptom Benefit Working Group – November 2014
3. Geriatric oncology seminar – Westmead hospital week – August 2015
4. Invitation to advise Cancer Australia on the issues Australia will face as the population ages. The topic of further research will involve the exploration of the impact of the aging population on cancer care in Australia.
5. Presentation at MASCC 2015 – Copenhagen June 2015.
6. I have the honour of being the chair of the scientific committee at SIOG 15 in Prague.

Service provision

The Royal Adelaide hospital in South Australia and the Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth, WA are currently running geriatric oncology clinics. The provision of geriatric oncology services remains a niche role within the national healthcare sector however. A handful of clinicians have trained in both geriatrics and oncology but the issues around the lack of a joint training programme remain.

The COSA geriatric oncology group will hold a strategic planning day in early 2015. We hope to garner more support for our activities and enable ongoing research in this field and will look for potential collaboration with other SIOG members in this regard.

Dr Christopher Steer

References

1. Lakhanpal R, Yoong J, Joshi S, et al: Geriatric assessment of older patients with cancer in Australia-A multicentre audit. J Geriatr Oncol 6:185-93, 2015

2. Parakh S, Wong H, Rai R, et al: Patterns of care and outcomes for elderly patients with metastatic colorectal cancer in Australia. J Geriatr Oncol, 2015

3. Yates P, Miaskowski C, Cataldo JK, et al: Differences in Composition of Symptom Clusters Between Older and Younger Oncology Patients. J Pain Symptom Manage 49:1025-34, 2015