
Preface

More than 180 participants and experts from 31 countries met for the fifth time in 10 years in St. Gallen, Switzerland for a 3-day conference to discuss important current issues of clinical cancer prevention. The meeting was again organized and co-sponsored by St. Gallen Oncology Conferences (SONK).

While SONK has been extremely successful in organizing large international congresses on “Primary Therapy of Early Breast Cancer” as well as “Supportive Care in Cancer” for more than 20 years, the idea of promoting interdisciplinary, clinically oriented meetings on cancer prevention is a more recent and not yet generally accepted and welcomed concept in modern oncology. Since today’s medical expenses are soaring and medical research budgets are stagnating or even being cut, neither politicians nor industry is willing to risk an additional unpredictable channel of expenses, such as that demanded by clinical cancer prevention efforts!

In Switzerland—and we fear in many other parts of the globe—some 97%–98% or even a greater percentage of health budgets is spent for curative and palliative/rehabilitative medicine. Since a meager 2%–3% of national health budgets is for preventive medicine, even less than that proportion is specifically allocated for cancer prevention. When the money for “curing and caring” for the diseased populace runs short, there is likely not much left for partly controversial disease prevention in the (still) healthy part of the population. Although this might be an extremely short-sighted view, it is noticeably prevalent with health politicians and even with large parts of the medical profession, at least in Continental Europe, today.

Despite this ironic situation, we have decided to keep trying to promote the promising field of clinical cancer prevention by organizing biannual international conferences in view of the accumulating interactions between molecular genetics and biology, epidemiology and clinical cancer prevention. Together with a growing number of scientific and professional partners, we intend to periodically set the stage for a comprehensive scientific discussion forum critically analyzing the development of more efficient and more acceptable primary and secondary cancer prevention approaches for the future. It is rather unfortunate that the oncology-oriented pharmaceutical industry—especially in Europe—is not yet willing or prepared to support this fascinating field, especially chemoprevention, by more appropriate research involvement and educational funding.

It was our privilege to co-organize this meeting again on behalf of the International Society of Cancer Prevention (ISCaP, New York, NY, USA) together with the European School of Oncology (ESO, Milan, Italy) and the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO, Lugano). For this fifth prevention conference in March 2008 we were able to generate some new and greatly welcomed additional and “neutral” supporters or sponsors: Cancer Research UK (CRUK, London, UK), the Union Internationale Contre le Cancer (UICC, Geneva, Switzerland), the European Association of Cancer Research (EACR, Nottingham, UK), the American Cancer Society (ACS, Atlanta, GA, USA), and the Swiss Cancer League (Bern, Switzerland). Very little financial support was provided by industry. The local organizers were Prof. Hans-Jörg Senn, MD, Prof. Ursula Kapp, MD, and Prof. Florian Otto, all from the prevention-oriented Tumor Center ZeTuP in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

This 2008 St. Gallen International Cancer Prevention Conference—in contrast to the previous meetings in 2004 and 2006—was primarily targeted to primary prevention, and even more specifically at the chemoprevention of major cancer types such as breast, colorectal, cervical, and lung. Besides the traditional sessions on health politics and organ-site-oriented cancer prevention efforts, we tried for the first time to upgrade this 2008 conference with a well-prepared consensus session on the present state of the art of chemoprevention of colorectal cancer by aspirin and nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), chaired by Prof. Jack Cuzick, president of ISCaP and director of the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine in London, UK, and by Dr. Peter Greenwald, the director of the prevention branch of the NCI in Bethesda, MD, USA.

This consensus of the use of aspirin and NSAIDs in chemoprevention of colorectal cancers will be published separately in a major oncology journal. As is the tradition, the majority of the invited expert contributions to the conference are published in this internationally well-known series, *Recent Results in Cancer Research*, by Springer. We hope you enjoy its multifaceted content.

Already the organizers invite dedicated scientists, epidemiologists, and clinicians interested in primary and secondary (clinical) cancer prevention to the next international cancer prevention conference, which will be held in St. Gallen, 18–20 March 2010.

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