

1- Status of Supportive Care in Cancer (SCC) in Argentina –

In Argentina, there are 25 BMT centers¹, 231 oncology services (adult and/or pediatric services), including private (176) and public hospitals (55) centers. In addition, 77 Pediatric Services and 630 Medical Clinical Centers there are thought to treat possible cancer treatment complications all over the country². However, only a few Oncology Services consider the necessity of the multidisciplinary team in Supportive Care. Palliative Care programs are developing throughout the country, but it is still unavailable to most patients. Oral and nutritional care are mostly provided by nurses or physicians with a general unawareness about their management. Although the importance of Cancer Nursing Care has been recognized in Argentina, it is estimated that only 30% of graduated nurses have held a degree in Cancer Nursing Clinical Practice. However, there is a higher percentage of nurses who come into contact with individuals with cancer.

¹- Instituto Nacional Central Unico Coordinador de Ablación e Implantes 2003-

²- Statistic Department of Health Ministry 2000

2- Rationale for Educational Programs in SCC in Argentina

In Argentina there is a clear unmet need of academic institutions, scientific societies and health care organizations for implementing educational programs, which encompass continuous training /scientific exchange and clinical research in SCC.

Although proper training and up-to date education is crucial, many several barriers such as economical reasons, long distances and difficult to get appropriate study leave cover hinder learning opportunities –mainly offered abroad- for professionals working in cancer care. At national level, specific disciplines pertaining to SCC are not included in any of the programs offered by educational institutions. Although some related activities have been held, all of them have consisted of short presentations included in conferences of medical general interest without covering specific issues of SCC.

In addition, research in supportive care shares most of the obstacles common to health research in the developing world. Effective models of supportive care delivery that have been tested in developed countries seldom apply to the developing world where insufficient health infrastructure requires the adaptation of such care to local circumstances. Research from developing countries is therefore needed to develop, implement, and monitor the delivery of supportive care in ways that are feasible in this setting with different resources. Additional obstacles include a lack of consideration of supportive care as part of cancer control strategies and the low political acceptability of such care because possible increasing costs.

3- What has been done in Argentina?

a) 1st Argentinean international symposium in Supportive Care in Cancer - Buenos Aires - Nov 30th Dec 1, 2006.

Scientific Auspice: International: MASCC/ISOO and the Immunocompromised Host Society (ICHS). National: Argentinean Dental Association, School of Dentistry of the University of Buenos Aires and Argentinean Society of Oncology Nursing.

Goal of the Symposium: to promote professional continuing education on SCC in Argentina and other South American countries. Primary learning objectives: 1) Transmit to the audience the role of a multidisciplinary teamwork in prevention and treatment of the oncology therapy complications, 2) Improve knowledge about acute and chronic long term cancer complications, 3) Recommend appropriate supportive care evidence-based measures for different cancer complications.

MASCC/ISOO Participation in the program.

Besides the scientific auspice, help and support from MASCC/ISOO was received by different means: 1) Drs Douglas Peterson, Mark Schubert, Cesar Migliorati and Eduardo Bruera, presented their lectures in the Oral Care and in the Palliative Care sessions; 2) Announcing on MASCC/ISOO website of the meeting; 3) A total of 150 of free copies of the official journal of Supportive Care in Cancer (Vol14-10-Oct2006) were distributed to attendees.

Summary of the conference: 389 professionals from different South American countries (Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay) participated, including nurses(42%), physicians(30%), dentists(18%), nutritionists(5%) and psychologists(5%). Parallel sessions with lectures(43), panel lectures with discussions(6) and thematic workshops(3) were held and national(23) and international(9) experts presented their lectures during the conference

Conclusions: The educational outcomes accomplished have encouraged us to continue organizing similar symposiums in the future. Attendees expressed their enthusiasm and desire to take part and be more actively involved with further activities. The appeal for strategies that lead to the formation of scientific organizations in fields of SCC was highlighted during the conference.

b) Oral Care in Cancer Session

As satellite scientific activity a two-hour session was celebrated. A total of 50 professionals participated in this meeting. First part of this session included the official introduction of MASCC/ISOO by Drs Peterson and Schubert. Second part was mainly focused to the foundation of the Argentinean Oral Care in Cancer Study Group (AOCC Study Group)

4- Short-term Aims for SCC in Argentina

A) THE ARGENTINEAN ORAL CARE IN CANCER STUDY GROUP (AOCC STUDY GROUP)

The AOCC Study Group is an initiative in oral oncology devoted to professional education that arises as a proposal to Argentina in the context of the promotion of SCC's educational activities in relation to MASCC/ISOO

MISSION of the AOCC Study Group: To educate professionals in Oral Supportive Care in Cancer (**OACC**) whose actions, discoveries, and voices could improve assistance in the Oral Care needed for the Argentinean cancer patient population, in collaboration with MASCC/ISOO and joining efforts with different South American countries involved.

OBJECTIVES of the AOCC Study Group

The objectives of this initiative are classified into "Argentinean" and "South-American" objectives.

- "ARGENTINEAN" OBJECTIVES

Identified Argentinean Objectives encompass two main areas of interest: Educational and Research. They are classified into SHORT-TERM (within a 3 year time period) and LONG-TERM (after 4 year and up to a 7 year time period) Objectives.

Short-term Objectives: (actions planned for 2007-2009)

The AOCC Study Group is moving forward developing and strengthening collaborative work with MASCC/ISOO by its Professional Liaison Committee to foster OSCC in Argentina. It is also committed to the creation of the Argentinean Oral Care in Cancer Collaborating Center made up of a Regional Collaboration Professional Network. This Center will be an important tool for three work lines: Educational (by developing applications to promote distance education and to make available oral health literature); Research (by making oral care protocols available to promote evidence-based practice and facilitate data collection on-line); and for MASCC/ISOO assistance in educational activities in Argentina by permanent link with cooperating institutions.

Continuing professional education specific plans for 2007-2009 period include:

1. Insertion of OSCC in relation to MASCC/ISOO as Inaugural component in the Scientific Program of the 34th International Conference from the Argentinean Odontological Association by holding an international training 3-hour course on November 2- 2007. On behalf of MASCC/ISOO, Dr Mark Schubert and Dr Cesar Migliorati will lecture on this course
2. Continuing education seminars on OSCC: 1-intended for general dentists and oral medicine specialists, three times a year; lectures at oncology centers intended for oncologists, physicians and nurses twice a year. During these lectures, MASCC/ISOO's mission and scope will be presented.

AOCC Study Group's research strategy plans for 2007-2009 period will include:

1. Develop and conduct a cross-cultural adaptation study of the Evidence-based Mucositis Guideline from the MASCC/ISOO Mucositis Study Group Section into the Spanish language and the subsequent implementation of the guideline in Argentina.
2. Develop and conduct a National Prospective Cohort Study Project on Bisphosphonate-associated Osteonecrosis of the Jaw. This project is in process in conjunction with the Institute for Clinical Effectiveness and Health Policy

SOUTH AMERICAN OBJECTIVES

Within the context of South American Initiatives of Educational Activities of MASCC/ISOO, the AOCC Study Group has the following objectives:

1. Assist MASCC/ISOO in developing good and productive relationships and to promote the concept of OSCC in South America
2. Assist MASCC/ISOO in preparing a strategic plan of education for professionals by creating a propitious environment for sharing knowledge amongst South American countries (i.e. Chile, Uruguay and Brazil)
3. Foster and participate in different initiatives and experiences of other countries concerning to the OSCC in relation to MASCC/ISOO
4. Promote joint educational and research activities related to OSCC between South American countries, i.e. coming project of cross-cultural adaptation of MASCC/ISOO Mucositis Study Group Evidence-based Clinical Practice Guideline into Spanish and Portuguese

B) THE ARGENTINEAN MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUP IN SUPPORTIVE CARE IN CANCER: A PROPOSAL TO ORGANIZE

For the purpose of drawing medical community's attention to the appeal for educational organizations on SCC in Argentina, a first meeting is planned to be held on August 15-2007.

The general goal of this meeting will be the foundation of the Argentinean Multidisciplinary Group in Supportive Care in Cancer whose actions, under the perspective of the MASCC/ISOO's Mission, will be aimed to improve assistance of cancer patients by promoting continuing professional education in different fields of supportive care. As the Argentinean Oral Care in Cancer Study Group, this group will be mainly charged with the responsibility to actively work in conjunction with MASCC/ISOO and others cancer organizations to pursue methods to improve supportive care for cancer patients throughout Argentina.

The objectives of this group will be: to facilitate MASCC/ISOO contact and communication with representatives of public and private health-care providers working with the Argentinean cancer population; to promote and coordinate international/national scientific exchange information; to encourage multidisciplinary clinical research studies by developing cooperative relationships, projects, and networks among professionals and institutions in the country; to promote, coordinate and enhance donations and sponsorship to support educational activities.

To accomplish these objectives, the first step shall be the creation of an "interactive team" made up of representative professionals who have been working either on educational programs or in supportive care at cancer services within the country. Palliative care physicians, infectious disease specialists, pediatricians, dentists, psychologists, nurses, nutritionists and epidemiologists will be invited to be part of the team and take the lead in this endeavor in their respective disciplines. Team members shall be asked to fill in a form providing details on the actions to be taken, identifying the specific areas of expertise and defining the lines of work to be developed; the specialists shall be informed of the MASCC/ISOO's mission and scope, different extension activities and will be encouraged to take part of them.