

German Expert Workshop

“ Bridging the Gaps between Supportive Care, Rehabilitation and Palliative Care”

For the 5th time experts of the German group for supportive care in oncology, rehabilitation and social medicine in oncology (ASORS) met in January 2008 to discuss the progress that has been achieved and the unmet needs that are the issues for the future in the field of supportive and palliative care and rehabilitation in oncology. They tried to identify and bridge the gaps between these three very closely related areas.

Petra Feyer and Hans-Helge Bartsch, both presidents of the ASORS, which is a working group within the German Cancer Society, raised awareness for the needs and goals of supportive, palliative and rehabilitative medicine both within the German cancer society and in German public in general and to encourage funding for future research.

The first part of the meeting focussed on the challenges and possibilities offered by complimentary and alternative treatment measures in oncology. The participants acknowledged the patients` interest in alternative and complimentary methods but stressed the possible dangers of these methods and demanded more research and a proper evidence base for unconventional and complimentary treatment concepts.

The state of the art in the management of various side effects such as chemotherapy-induced nausea and emesis refractory to standard treatment or osteonecrosis of the jaw as well as specific rehabilitative programs for different cancer patients were presented and discussed. The experts agreed that patients benefit from individually tailored rehabilitative programs. One of the more recent challenges is the management of side effects caused by targeted therapies and was discussed at length.

Although today there exist a number of treatment guidelines for various supportive and rehabilitative measures those guidelines need to be common knowledge for physicians treating cancer patients and need to be implemented in the daily practice. A compendium of guidelines will shortly be published by the German cancer society containing a comprehensive chapter about supportive measures in oncology written by members of the ASO.

The final lectures tried to discover synergies between supportive, palliative and rehabilitative care and to find ways to close the gaps between the three despite the obvious distinctions. The increasing number of older patients, the management of side effects of targeted

therapies and the ever increasing costs of supportive care are future challenges to supportive care in Germany. In order to achieve and maintain adequate treatment standards guidelines need to be reviewed on a regular basis, they need to be spread via the media and they need to be accessible to physicians easily.

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