The NCCN 21st Annual Conference: Discussing Key Issues and Updated NCCN Guidelines

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This year’s NCCN Annual Conference: Advancing the Standard of Cancer Care was record-breaking, with the most attendees in its 21-year history. The breadth of topics presented at the conference is a reflection of the impact NCCN and the NCCN Guidelines have on people with cancer and their families. This special issue of JNCCN—Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network presents these highlights as a synopsis of the proceedings.

The NCCN 21st Annual Conference continued the track session format begun in 2015. In this year’s track sessions, attendees had the opportunity to hear expert presentations on more than 15 cancer types and supportive care topics.

For example, the newest NCCN Guidelines for Vulvar Cancer, which were published in February 2016, were presented by NCCN Guidelines Panel Co-Chairs, Wui-Jin Koh, MD, and Benjamin E. Greer, MD, from Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center/Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. These NCCN Guidelines provide recommendations on the evaluation and treatment of squamous cell carcinoma of the vulva and include principles of surgery, principles of radiation therapy, and systemic therapy.

Among the supportive care sessions this year was “Cancer Pain Management: Strategies for Safe and Effective Opioid Prescribing,” presented by Judith A. Paice, PhD, RN, from Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University. This presentation included best practices for safe assessment and management of chronic pain in people with cancer in order to avoid drug misuse and abuse.

Attendees were also able to learn more about the NCCN Guidelines with NCCN Evidence Blocks. In my presentation with Eric Jonasch, MD, from The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, we discussed these blocks, which are the visual representation of 5 key measurements—efficacy, safety, quality and quantity of evidence, consistency of evidence, and affordability—and their implementation into the NCCN Guidelines for Kidney Cancer. For more information about the NCCN Evidence Blocks, the user guide can be found on NCCN.org (http://www.nccn.org/evidenceblocks/pdf/EvidenceBlocksUserGuide.pdf).

The 21st Annual Conference also featured several of the NCCN’s seminal panels and roundtables. For example, the opening roundtable, moderated by Toby C. Campbell, MD, MSCI, from University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center, “Palliative Care: Providing Comfort From a Patient and Provider Perspective,” featured experts representing both the clinical and patient experience with palliative care. The multidisciplinary panel provided insight into the value of palliative care in the cancer care continuum, noting the importance of a team approach, early intervention, and an open, continuous dialogue.

The other important roundtable presented this year, “Emerging Issues in Oncology: Cancer Care in an Election Year,” featured moderators Kavita Patel, MD, MSHS, Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Marc Samuels, JD, MPH, Founder and CEO of ADVI, with panelists that included Cybele Bjorklund, MHS, Distinguished Visitor/Senior Fellow, Georgetown University; Lanhee J. Chen, PhD, David and Diane Steffy Research Fellow, Hoover Institution; Elizabeth J.
Fowler, PhD, JD, Vice President, Global Health Policy, Johnson & Johnson; and Scott Gottlieb, MD, Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute. A synopsis of this roundtable is not available in these Highlights, but can be accessed online at NCCN.org (https://www.nccn.org/about/news/newsinfo.aspx?NewsID=646).

“Controversies in Breast Cancer Screening Strategies” used a panel format with expert representatives from the American Cancer Society, NCCN, and U.S. Preventive Services Task Force to discuss the different breast cancer screening recommendations for women in the United States at average risk for the disease.

Other programs held on site were the 2016 Nursing Program: Advancing Oncology Nursing, the 2016 NCCN Oncology Fellows Program: New Horizons in Quality Cancer Care, and the 5th annual State Oncology Society Forum. Abstracts from the general poster sessions, which featured study outcomes from more than 70 presenters, including some of the most recent NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Award recipients, are in these Highlights and online at JNCCN.org. We look forward to even further growth in 2017 (March 23–25) as we move this conference to Orlando.

The NCCN Annual Conference is only one facet of the work that NCCN does as we strive to be the world leader in defining and advancing high-quality, high-value cancer care. Please visit NCCN.org for more information and to access programs such as the NCCN Guidelines and to watch, and participate in, NCCN’s continuing evolution.