

## Iressa - A New Weapon in the Battle Against Lung Cancer

by: P. Thomas Porter, M.D.

It may have started with a cough or with a pain in your chest. You may have had pneumonia that kept coming back. Your doctor ordered a chest x-ray and when you received the results your nightmare began. In a split second your life has been put on hold with test after test. Finally you hear the dreaded words - Lung Cancer.

Lung cancer is now the most common form of cancer diagnosed in the United States. It accounts for 14% of all cancers and 28% of all cancer deaths. 87% of all lung cancers are from smokers. Male smokers have a death rate 15-25 times higher than that of non-smokers. Female smokers' death rate, albeit lower, is 2-5 times higher than non-smokers.

Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy are the mainstays of treatment. These therapies, particularly chemotherapy, have improved over the years. New "targeted" treatments are emerging, giving patients more options, and more importantly, a better quality of life due to fewer side effects.

Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists remain on the leading edge of cancer care by participating in many clinical trials that make promising new drugs available to you. **Iressa**, manufactured by AstraZeneka, is one of these innovative drugs which work by blocking signals that direct the cell to grow and divide. On the surface of many types of cancer cells are structures known as epidermal growth factor receptors. These receptors, when

activated, set into motion a series of chemical signals directing the cell to grow. Iressa attaches itself to the epidermal growth factor receptor inside the cell, stopping the process of cell growth. Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists has participated in clinical trials utilizing Iressa for over 2 years prior to its approval earlier this year for the treatment of lung cancer.

Epidermal growth factor receptors are found in other cancers, including breast cancer, colon cancer and prostate cancer. Current trials are now looking into whether Iressa is effective in these malignancies. Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists continues to be on the forefront of cancer treatment through our commitment to clinical trials which offer patients state of the art treatment options. Please look at our clinical trials list in the newsletter or contact Theresa Kulman at our Van Elslander Cancer Center office for more information.



## NURSES CORNER

Welcome to Nurses Corner, where each issue a member of the GLCMS Nursing Staff will share important information and education with you regarding many aspects of patient care. The topics will cover a wide range of subjects, including nutrition, antiemetic protocols, support groups, skin care, and many other related ideas that we feel will be of interest to you. If you feel there is a topic that needs to be researched and discussed, or if you find any information you wish to share with other patients, please let us know so we can include it in this column.

Excellent nursing care is a vital part of our practice and nurses are always willing to expand our patients' horizons regarding the sharing of any information we receive from physicians and patients. Each of our patients has the right to know as much as possible regarding his or her treatment. Our nurses are committed to

providing support and alleviate fears as much as possible during this difficult time. Sometimes it's just a simple explanation, a willing ear to listen, a hand to hold or a hug to be given. Our nursing staff is always available to help you navigate the often terrifying road of cancer treatment.

If you would like a topic to be discussed in this column, please contact me by phone (313-884-5522) or leave a note at either office addressed to my attention. Remember, our nursing staff will always be here to help you in any way we can.



JoAnna Sheen, RN, BSN, OCN  
Nursing Supervisor

## WELCOME

Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists is pleased to announce the addition of **Muhammad Shurafa, M.D.** to our practice.



Dr. Shurafa graduated from the American University of Beirut Medical School in 1973. He trained in Internal Medicine at Rutgers Medical School in New Jersey. After completing his fellowship training in Hematology at Wayne State University in 1977 he joined the faculty there as an assistant professor.

In 1989 Dr. Shurafa was recruited to join the senior staff at Henry Ford Hospital in the division of Hematology-Oncology. As section head, he played a leadership role in shaping and developing the Hematology clinical service. He also served as the co-director of the fellowship program and was responsible for the hematology training until 2001. Dr. Shurafa established the federally funded Hemophilia Center and later the thrombosis and hemostasis service. He contributed to the transfusion policies and pathways. He also organized and streamlined leukemia care there. A variety of diagnostic profiles and pathways continue to be observed at Henry Ford Hospital.

Dr. Shurafa is well recognized locally and nationally and has participated in multicentered national and international clinical trials and cutting edge clinical research in leukemia, multiple myeloma and lymphoma. He brings with him a vast knowledge and experience in the field of hematology. Dr. Shurafa is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in Medicine and Hematology. He is a South West Oncology Group investigator and serves as a member of the Leukemia working group. He is a member of the American Society of Hematology, American Society of Clinical Oncology, Myelodysplastic Syndrome Society, and the International Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis.

**Clinical Trials  
Provide Advances in  
Cancer Treatment**

How are the decisions made regarding the various options for cancer treatment? Whether you realize it or not, the doctor making those decisions in any individual case is basing his recommendations from evidence gained from previous clinical trials. The National Cancer Institute sponsors major clinical trials across the country in virtually every kind of cancer in order to continually advance the state of the art and improve the results of cancer treatment. Progress in the field of oncology is dependant on the courage of cancer patients volunteering to participate not only to benefit themselves but also to advance the field for those who will follow them. It is from this body of knowledge that cancer specialists refer to when making treatment decisions.

In order to gain access to these important trials, physicians and their staff must be accepted into an organization that has been approved for participation. This organization is usually a Community Cancer Outreach Program (CCOP). The physician must demonstrate a standard of excellence and commitment to high quality care. This standard is continually audited in order to remain a member in good standing. All of the physicians at Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists are members of the Michigan Cancer Research Consortium (MCRC)(CCOP). This is a collection of high quality community hospitals across the state of Michigan. Dr. Robert J. Leonard has served as the Principal Investigator at St. John Hospital & Medical Center since its inception. This

allows us access to most of the major clinical trials offered across the country.

There are three different phases of clinical trials:

Phase 1

The goal of these studies is to establish a proper dose and the major side effects associated with a brand new experimental drug. Very few institutions participate in these studies and they are beyond the scope of trials done at GLCMS.

Phase 2

These studies serve as pilot programs for promising treatments for a particular tumor type for which there is no firmly established effective standard of care.

Phase 3

These studies are head-to-head comparisons of several different treatment options. One of these treatments is considered the "standard of care" that the other treatment arms are compared against. Comparisons are made in terms of effectiveness as well as side effects and the treatment assigned to a particular patient is assigned randomly and cannot be selected by the patient or doctor.

Participation in a clinical trial can provide a valuable option in a cancer patient's treatment. First, it must be determined that the situation and details of the case fit the strict requirements outlined by the national study office. If this is the case, the doctor and research nurse can carefully explain the protocol in detail to the patient and family. In order to proceed, the patient must sign an Informed Consent. It must be

remembered that participation in clinical trials is completely voluntary and the patient can withdraw at any time. Clinical trials can provide new drugs that show early promise as effective therapy but have not been released yet. It also provides a detailed treatment program which has been designed by the leading national experts in that particular type of cancer. Participation in a clinical trial assures the patient of the highest level of quality control since all details of the treatment side effects and results of therapy must be carefully documented and submitted to the national experts. Participating doctors are regularly given updates by the national organizations to modify or amend the protocol if early results indicate a need for this. Patients are followed for years after treatment is completed in order to assess the full results of therapy.

Clinical trials may not be appropriate or desirable for every patient but the involvement by GLCMS demonstrates a commitment to providing patients the latest cutting edge therapies as well as assuring the highest level of quality care. In future issues we will highlight specific exciting trials for different types of cancer and why we feel that they are important for advancing the field of cancer medicine.

**GREAT LAKES CANCER  
MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS  
PHYSICIANS**

- Robert J. Leonard, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- Daniel J. Lehman, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- Efrain R. Casas, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- Laura A. Biernat, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- P. Thomas Porter, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- Jerome E. Seid, M.D.
- Robert M. O'Bryan, M.D., F.A.C.P.
- Muhammad Shurafa, M.D.

**VAN ELSLANDER CANCER CENTER**  
19229 Mack Avenue, Suite 24  
Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan 48236  
Tel: 313.884.5522 • Fax: 313.884.6054

**WASHINGTON CENTER**  
11051 Hall Road, Suite 120  
Utica, Michigan 48317  
Tel: 586.991.0700 • Fax: 586.991.0701



[www.greatlakescms.com](http://www.greatlakescms.com)

Designed, produced and distributed by  
Ascensys Technology (888-468-6030) and  
M&H Marketing (248-349-2794)

FIRST-CLASS MAIL	
AUTO	
U.S. POSTAGE	
<b>PAID</b>	
PERMIT NO. 111	



**Great Lakes Cancer  
Management Specialists**  
Practice limited to Medical Oncology and Hematology  
VAN ELSLANDER CANCER CENTER  
19229 Mack Avenue, Suite 24  
Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan 48236

