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ZOOM ON CANCER

HYBRID LECTURE

The success and challenges of introducing PARP inhibitors into the therapy of ovarian cancer- a clinician's perspective

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17th June Thursday 2021

14:00
Candiotty Auditorium

It is almost a decade since the results of maintenance therapy with the PARP inhibitor olaparib in recurrent ovarian cancer initiated a large-scale effort to establish this class of drugs as an important treatment for recurrent ovarian cancer, and more recently for front-line therapy. The development of this work was based on a growing understanding of the impaired DNA damage repair mechanisms that exist in ovarian cancer, typified by the effect of mutations in BRCA genes on homologous recombination repair of DNA damage. In addition to BRCAmut, other DNA damage response processes can give rise to an homologous recombination repair deficient phenotype, that has expanded the application of PARP inhibitors to treat a significant proportion of BRCAwt tumours. PARP inhibitors are generally well-tolerated oral compounds suitable for long-term use. Their success has been measured by demonstrating a significant extension of progression-free survival. However, progression of disease on or after therapy is still a problem for many patients, leading to questions about how to prevent this, or how to treat patients 'post PARP inhibitors'. Understanding the mechanisms underlying partial or complete resistance to these drugs will be of great clinical value. Currently, several studies are in progress to enhance the activity of PARP inhibitors, or to use them to make other treatments more effective. Whilst PARP inhibitors have clearly changed the landscape of treatment and resulted in significant clinical benefit, research to overcome resistance or to target alternative pathways is crucial.

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