

## **Response to Cancer drugs, survival, and ethics by the Association of Cancer Physicians**

As UK health professionals specialising in the drug treatment of cancer, we feel Dr Wise's analysis strays into the territory of unbalanced opinion piece (1). We welcome discussion of issues that we debate ourselves; his article is a useful counterpoint to the hyperbole we often see in the media surrounding incremental improvements in treatment. However, he conflates issues from different healthcare systems, failing to credit specialists to maintain high ethical standards, and awareness of treatment limitations. There are potential issues surrounding conflicts of interest, perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the United States where reimbursement through Medicare means that doctors may benefit from prescribing more expensive drugs; fortunately, in the UK within the NHS there are no such perverse incentives.

Dr Wise describes the approval of drugs with evidence of minimal gains in survival. However, he does not mention that most will not be approved by NICE in the UK or be in routine use. Unquestionably, significant advances in survival due to systemic treatments have been seen, and continue to develop, in both the adjuvant and metastatic setting (2).

Members of the Association of Cancer Physicians (ACP) lead initiatives to improve efficacy and quality of care. These include, data collection and publication (3), and educational workshops. Collaborating with patients, we have produced a strategy document to drive care improvements (4), and with Cancer Research UK developed treatment consent forms to encourage full and frank discussions with patients (5).

Oncologists are very conscious of financial constraints on healthcare systems, and work with patients, charities, research institutions, government, and pharmaceutical companies, to develop more effective, targeted treatments, and fully informed patients. Supporting patients at end of life to make the best decisions for them and their family, with empathy and kindness is one of the facets of our job that makes it so rewarding and why we choose it as a career.

Dr Adam Dangoor, Professor Johnathan Joffe, Dr Adam Januszewski, Dr Janine Mansi, Professor David Cunningham, and Professor Peter Selby on behalf of 17 other authors and members of the Association of Cancer Physicians, UK

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