

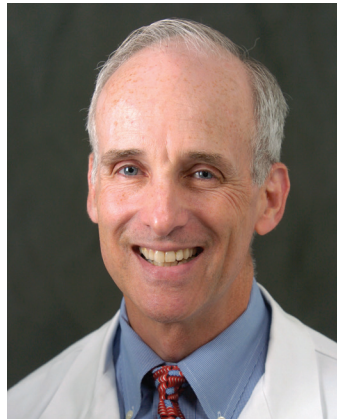
# It's not your mother/father's ASCO anymore...

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Well, what just happened in Chicago? Nearly 30,000 of our closest friends and colleagues descended on the windy city to meet in the McCormick Center to catch up on the latest data and updates in oncology at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual conference. What a marathon meeting it was. Who remembers when the meeting was held in one hotel (can you believe it), then two hotels, and then eventually shifted to convention centers to accommodate the burgeoning numbers of attendees?

The program format is also quite different now than it was at the outset. Then, there would be some industry-sponsored symposia on Friday, while Saturday and Sunday were devoted entirely to educational sessions, which were very broadly based with take-home updates for the generalist, followed by the plenary session on Sunday afternoon to showcase the new data before going into 2 days of all new data presentations on Monday and Tuesday. Now, industry symposia are scattered throughout the 4 days of the conference – mostly dinners, which I thought were quite good – and the educational sessions, oral sessions, and posters are all interspersed from Saturday through Tuesday. Furthermore, these days, both the educational sessions and the original data presentations are highly focused on a single subspecialty area. Gone are the days of the educational session update on adjuvant breast cancer; these days, the educational session might be titled something along the lines of “locally advanced, HER2-positive breast cancer update.” And while the sessions this year were extremely accessible and interactive, offering a range of social and electronic media opportunities for listening, learning, and even posing questions during each session, it is important to remember that one of the most valuable aspects of the ASCO meeting is the personal interaction and the ability to network and discuss the latest data with friends and colleagues.

The conference is of course extremely important because all the best, newest data are presented at a single large meeting, but that actually also creates a problem with the



meeting. Generalists are finding it increasingly difficult to justify the trip to Chicago because it is possible to attend only a fraction of the sessions – mainly those that provide useful “what you need to know” or “how I treat” takeaways. So why make the trip when one could simply read about the presentations afterward or attend the popular regional ASCO review sessions that are held after the main conference?

But let's return to the meeting and the presentations. Just how many times do you think you said or heard the phrase “PD-1 inhibitor” at this year's ASCO? What a phenomenal development. This year, Suzanne L Topalian of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine delivered the David A Karnofsky memorial lecture on the science of PD-1 inhibitors. The immune system is poised to fight the cancer cell, but the cancer cell has found a way to reach out and push the “off” switch on the immune effector cells. The PD-1 inhibitor covers

the off-switch and allows the immune effector system to recognize and fight the cancer cell. Moreover, we learned that the greater the number of mutations in the cancer cell, the greater the immune response to fight it, and finally, the greater the number of tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes (TIL cells) in the tumor, the greater the immune effector system response to recognize and kill the cancer. This immune therapeutic development is just in its infancy, and the next year or so will likely give us the biomarker tools we need to zero in with the right PD-1 inhibitor for the right tumor, with mutation status, and TIL cells and more to follow.

In our issue this month, we feature Original Reports on emesis prevention in children with cancer chemotherapy demonstrating; the use of simultaneous integrated boost during stereotactic radiosurgery for resected brain metastases; the impact of nurse navigation on the timeliness of diagnostic medical services; and measuring end-of-life care in oncology practices. The Journal Club column is dedicated to cardiovascular disease in oncology. Remember to download the app for our digital issue by visiting our website at <http://www.oncologypractice.com/jcso/>.