

# Advances *in* RESEARCH

## Gynecologic Oncology Program

SPRING 2008

### >> FROM OUR DESK TO YOURS:

## The Responsibility of Research: Saving Lives with Novel Therapies

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As the new Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, I am pleased to provide some comments on the research program in Gynecologic Oncology here at the University of Wisconsin. It is an outstanding program and I am very happy to be a part of this thriving endeavor. I moved to Madison from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville where I was the Director of the Gynecologic Oncology Program. I have been working in research, patient care, and education in women's cancer throughout my entire career.

Despite many advances in the field of gynecologic cancers, there are a number of areas that warrant focused attention. In Gynecologic Oncology, all of our efforts, including patient care, research and education, are directed towards curing female pelvic cancers. In our Spring 2008 newsletter, we feature an exciting protocol aimed at improving the outcome for women with advanced cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is often a preventable and curable disease. Sadly, because of diminished access to care for some women, we continue to see patients presenting to our offices with advanced stage cervical cancer. Unfortunately this clinical situation represents, in many circumstances, a poor prognosis.

The mainstay treatment for cervical cancer in the advanced setting is radiation therapy. More recently, chemotherapy has been playing a larger role in this setting. In 1999 the National Cancer Institute announced that several studies have confirmed that women who receive combination chemotherapy and radiation therapy have a significantly improved survival over those women who receive radiation therapy alone. This announcement represented the

culmination of many years of multi-center clinical cancer trials, several of which the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at the University of Wisconsin participated in. Our Division continues to play a major role in supporting these trials, and we consider this to be one of our major responsibilities to our patients.

Establishing cutting edge, novel therapies in the treatment of women with pelvic malignancies is a critical component of our mission. While there are multiple novel therapies being investigated at the University of Wisconsin, "biologic" therapies represent a unique and innovative opportunity to fight malignancies of all types. One example is Cetuximab, a biologic agent that has shown success in clinical trials for the treatment of squamous cell cancers of the head and neck. Our Division is thrilled to be enrolling patients in a clinical trial combining this agent with radiation and chemotherapy in the treatment of patients with advanced cervical cancer.

We ask for your support as we continue to expand and broaden our efforts in the treatment of women with gynecologic malignancies. We are dedicated to providing our patients with the state of the art cancer treatments, and appreciate your support in pursuing this important work.



by **Laurel W. Rice, MD**  
*Professor and Chair,  
Department of OB/GYN*

>> OUR FEATURE PROTOCOL

**GOG 9918: A Phase I Trial of Tailored Radiation Therapy with Concomitant Cetuximab and Cisplatin in the Treatment of Patients with Cervical Cancer**

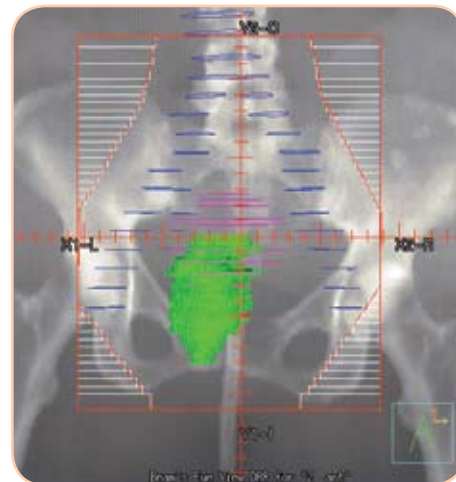
Radiation therapy is commonly used to treat many gynecologic cancers, including cervical cancer. Often times radiation is used as the primary, or definitive, treatment. When this is the case, the median long-term survival increases for cervical cancer patients undergoing primary radiation therapy in conjunction with cisplatin chemotherapy as a “chemosensitizer.”

However, researchers continue to search for better treatment options to further increase overall survival and progression-free survival in cervical cancer. For cancers as aggressive as those of the cervix, better targeted therapies are needed to offer cures to patients with such diseases. Cetuximab is one such biologic agent that is currently being used in colorectal and head and neck cancers and is now under study in cervical cancer.

Cetuximab targets angiogenesis markers particularly in squamous cell carcinomas. It binds to the extracellular domain of the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) and prevents ligand activation of EGFR. This can lead to cell arrest, cell death via apoptosis and inhibition of cell invasion and angiogenesis. A majority of cervical cancers overexpress EGFR.

Therefore, targeting therapy at this process along with chemotherapeutic agents has shown, in prior studies, a supraadditive increase in growth inhibition of tumor cells. Thus, the combination of Cetuximab and cisplatin with radiation therapy can potentially increase the progression-free survival for patients with cervical carcinoma.

The Gynecologic Oncology Group (GOG) is currently conducting a Phase I clinical trial to determine the maximum tolerated and biologically effective dose of Cetuximab in combination with cisplatin and extended field radiation or whole pelvis radiation and brachytherapy in women with cervical carcinoma. Women with stage IB-IVA disease are eligible, and may not have had prior treatment for their cervical cancer. Patients receive daily whole pelvic radiation therapy along with weekly cisplatin and Cetuximab for a total of six weeks. Patients with evidence of positive para-aortic or pelvic lymph nodes receive extended field radiation to the lymph nodes. All patients also undergo intracavitary brachytherapy. The University of Wisconsin Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of ten participating institutions across the country.



>> **PROTOCOL ELIGIBILITY\***

**Key eligibility criteria\*:**

- Stage IB-IVA cervical cancer, any histologic type
- Positive or negative lymph nodes
- GOG Performance Status 0-1
- No renal abnormalities
- No significant history of cardiac disease
- No previous pelvic or abdominal radiation, cytotoxic chemotherapy, or previous therapy of any kind for this malignancy

**\*select eligibility**

>> **SAVE THE DATE**

**September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month. Please join us in September for two exciting events benefiting the UW Gynecologic Oncology program:**

***Jewel of an Evening***

An event at the Monona Terrace on September 3, 2008, to raise funds and awareness for the University of Wisconsin Gynecologic Oncology Program. At this event we acknowledge that it is possible not just to survive, but to actually thrive in the midst of a devastating cancer diagnosis.

***Discovering You***

A community program benefiting the UW Gynecologic Oncology program on September 14, 2008, at the Hilldale Mall in Madison. Sponsored by the UW Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ford Models, Inc.



Please visit [www.cancer.wisc.edu](http://www.cancer.wisc.edu) for more information

## >> OUR CURRENT PROTOCOLS

A complete listing of all clinical trials at the UW Carbone Cancer Center is also available on our website, [www.cancer.wisc.edu](http://www.cancer.wisc.edu).

### Ovarian

- GOG 212** *A Randomized Phase III Trial of Maintenance Chemotherapy Comparing Single Agent Paclitaxel or Xyotax Versus No Treatment Until Documented Relapse in Women with Advanced Ovarian or Primary Peritoneal Cancer*
- GOG 218** *A Phase III Trial of Carboplatin and Paclitaxel Plus Placebo Versus Carboplatin and Paclitaxel Plus Concurrent Bevacizumab In Women with Newly Diagnosed, Previously Untreated, Advanced Stage Epithelial Ovarian and Peritoneal Cancer*
- CO 07702** *A Phase II Randomized, Blinded, Placebo-controlled Trial of Carboplatin and Gemcitabine plus Bevacizumab in Patients with Platinum-Sensitive Recurrent Ovary, Primary Peritoneal, or Fallopian Tube Carcinoma*
- GOG 213** *A Phase III Randomized Controlled Clinical Trial of Carboplatin and Paclitaxel Alone or in Combination with Bevacizumab Followed by Bevacizumab and Secondary Cytoreductive Surgery in Platinum-Sensitive, Recurrent Ovarian, Peritoneal Primary and Fallopian Tube Cancer*
- GOG 170-I** *A Phase II Evaluation of CCI-779 (Temsirrolimus®) in the Treatment of Persistent or Recurrent Epithelial Ovarian or Primary Peritoneal Carcinoma*

### Uterine

- GOG 209** *A Randomized Phase III Trial of Doxorubicin/Cisplatin/Paclitaxel and G-CSF versus Carboplatin/Paclitaxel in Patients with Stage III & IV or Recurrent Endometrial Cancer*
- GOG 229F** *A Phase II Evaluation of VEGF-Trap (Aflibercept®) in the Treatment of Recurrent or Persistent Endometrial Carcinoma*
- GOG 87M** *A Phase II Evaluation of Trabectedin (Yondelis®) in the Treatment of Advanced, Persistent or Recurrent Uterine Leiomyosarcomas*

### Cervical

- GOG 206** *Lymphatic Mapping and Sentinel Node Identification in Patients with Stage IB1 Cervical Carcinoma*
- GOG 9918** *A Phase I Trial of Tailored Radiation Therapy with Concomitant Cetuximab and Cisplatin in the Treatment of Patients with Cervical Cancer*
- RTOG 0418** *A Phase II Study of Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) to the Pelvis +/- Chemotherapy for Post-operative Patients with Cervical Carcinoma*

### Vulvar

- GOG 173** *Intraoperative Lymphatic Mapping and Sentinel Node Identification in Patients with Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Vulva*

>> **FOR MORE INFORMATION** about these clinical trials at the UW Carbone Cancer Center, contact Cancer Connect, (800) 622-8922 or (608) 262-5223 in the Madison area.

### >> UW GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY RESEARCH STAFF:

- Sarah L. Stewart, Research Program Manager
- Angela M. Marchant, Clinical Research Associate
- Katy A. Mijal, Clinical Research Associate



# TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE LIVES Learn More About UW Gynecologic Oncology

• **Our Feature Protocol:**  
*GOG 9918: A Phase I Trial of Tailored  
Radiation Therapy with Concomitant  
Cetuximab and Cisplatin in the  
Treatment of Patients with  
Cervical Cancer*

• **“The Responsibility of Research:  
Saving Lives with Novel Therapies”**  
*by Laurel W. Rice M.D.*

»» INSIDE THIS ISSUE

## Advances IN RESEARCH

### »» DID YOU KNOW?

- **The majority of women with a diagnosis of uterine cancer can have minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery for their treatment.**
- **Cervical cancer kills more women world wide than any other cancer, particularly in developing countries where basic screening and preventive services, such as pap smears, are often inaccessible.**
- **September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, which provides an opportunity to educate women about the prevention, early detection and treatment of all gynecologic cancers.**

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