

ITOG Announces Selumetinib Trial

ITOG is soon to open a new clinical trial led by Dr. Alan Ho of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, NY to evaluate the effectiveness of selumetinib to enhance uptake of radioactive iodine (RAI) for treatment of advanced thyroid cancer. This will be a large, investigator-initiated, randomized, placebo controlled Phase II trial of selumetinib (AZD6244, ARRY-142886) in patients with RAI-avid, recurrent or metastatic thyroid cancer of follicular cell origin.

Radioiodine is a key therapy for patients with metastatic thyroid cancer of follicular origin, yet many patients have tumors that are no longer able to concentrate iodine, resulting in radioiodine resistance and poor prognosis. Aberrant mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) activation has been shown to diminish RAI uptake and efficacy in thyroid cancers. This observation led ITOG members Dr. Jim Fagin and Dr. Alan Ho to test the efficacy of blocking MAPK signaling with the MAPK kinase (MEK) inhibitor selumetinib to restore radioiodine incorporation in tumors of patients with resistant thyroid cancers. The initial clinical trial of 20 patients established the feasibility of this approach and demonstrated the efficacy of treating with selumetinib to enhance radioiodine uptake and improve therapeutic efficiency. This encouraging work was published in the February 14th 2013 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine and is the basis for this larger clinical trial with 94 planned patients.



Dr. Alan Ho

ITOG's second clinical trial will be coordinated by the Academic and Community Cancer Research United (ACCRU) and would be funded in part by AstraZeneca. During the trial, eligible patients will be randomized to treatment with selumetinib versus placebo, administered twice daily for 4 weeks, followed by radioiodine therapy. In addition to monitoring cancer progression status, tumor and blood samples will be analyzed for markers that may predict which patients may benefit from this strategy as well as shed light on how MAPK signaling contributes to radioiodine resistance.

This trial is in the final stages of development and is expected to open in early 2015 to patients with advanced thyroid cancer. Be sure to check the ITOG Clinical Trials page (<http://www.itog.org/clinical-trials>) for more information.



Elizabeth and Michael Ruane

Elizabeth & Michael Ruane Honored

When diagnosed with a challenging illness, a cloud develops over one's life. Jean Vicks did not focus on the cloud, but looked for silver linings. Jean's incomparable spirit and incredible will to live, especially for her family, motivated her into action to seek the best physicians. As a varsity field hockey player at The University Virginia, she learned that the value of playing as a team is so much more powerful than working as individuals. That is the vision of ITOG: A Dream Team of the *best* to work *together* to find better treatments for the rare and challenging diagnosis of thyroid cancer. Thankfully this vision was shared by many others who helped put this team together such as Bob Gagel, Barry Nelkin, Doug Ball, Steve Sherman, Sam Wells and Elizabeth and Michael Ruane.

One of the shiniest of silver linings for Jean was the friendship gained with Elizabeth and Michael Ruane. Jean and Elizabeth shared a rare diagnosis of thyroid cancer, for Jean it was Medullary Thyroid Carcinoma and for Elizabeth, Hurthle Cell Carcinoma. Introduced through a mutual friend, Jean and Elizabeth immediately became close allies. They had much in common – devotion to their families, strong faith, and mothers of three children including twins. They picked the same doctors for their battle with cancer: Dr. Gilbert Daniels, Dr. Mike Tuttle, Dr. Greg Randolph, and Dr. Lori Wirth.

Elizabeth and Michael instantly became advocates of ITOG. Giving to worthy causes has always been paramount to the Ruanes. Their commitment, leadership and generosity to ITOG remain unparalleled. In addition to exceptional financial contributions, Elizabeth and Michael have hosted ITOG members in their home, promoted the value of the organization, and designated ITOG as the charitable beneficiary of the TA Realty annual golf tournament.

The ITOG Board created a very special award to recognize and express gratitude for a commitment to ITOG that is truly exceptional, and conduct that reflects the positive proactive and selfless spirit of Jean Vicks, one of the primary inspirations for the creation of ITOG. Jean passed away in April 2013 after her thirteen year struggle with MTC. At the 2014 ITOG Annual Meeting in April, the inaugural *Jean Vicks Inspiration Award* was presented to Elizabeth and Michael Ruane.

The Ruanes have faced Elizabeth's health challenge head-on, with optimism, determination, and aplomb – inspiring those around them, including the grateful members of ITOG and their patients. Their belief in the mission of ITOG and devotion to its purpose truly reflect the spirit with which this award was conceived.

In her remarks accepting ITOG's highest honor, Elizabeth said, "We decided that supporting ITOG was of utmost importance because of the collaborative nature of the organization and the caliber of the physicians that were involved. Great minds working together to help those with thyroid cancer." Congratulations Elizabeth and Michael Ruane!

The 2014 "Go To" Annual Meeting

The 8th annual ITOG meeting was held in Boston, MA at the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center on April 25-27th. The meeting was organized and hosted by ITOG members Dr. Lori Wirth, Dr. Gil Daniels, Dr. Sareh Parangi, Dr. David McFadden, and the late Mr. Rick Abrams. Each year the annual meeting has grown in size and this year nearly 60 attendees from over 20 different medical institutions convened to learn and collaborate. More than 25 scientific, clinical, and business sessions were held during the weekend, including talks by prominent invited guest speakers Dr. Rakesh Jain, Dr. Jay Bradner, and Dr. Jeff Engelman.

Scientific sessions also included presentations by ITOG members. Dr. Ross Cagan of Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai discussed the Center for Personalized Cancer Therapeutics, whose goal is to generate improved cancer diagnoses and treatments that are based on a patient's personal cancer genome. Dr. Bryan Haugen of the University of Colorado, Denver gave a talk titled "Tumor Immunology in Thyroid Cancer: Reviving the Exhausted T Cell". Dr. Yuri Nikiforov of the University of Pittsburgh described his recent discovery of rearrangements involving the anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) gene in thyroid cancer, and provided compelling evidence that this rearrangement represents a therapeutic target for patients with aggressive thyroid cancer.

The sessions were broken up by walks around Boston and – in an effort to de-stress – a group deep-breathing and mindfulness session led by Ramel Rones, a leading mind-body/Tai Chi/Qi Gong researcher and teacher. ITOG members had dinner at The Harvard Club where the featured dinner speaker was Dr. Wen T. Shen of the University of California, San Francisco, who specializes in thyroid, parathyroid and adrenal gland surgery. He has an interest in medical history and he fascinated the audience with a talk titled "Trial by Fire: The 1942 Cocomanut Grove Disaster and the Evolution of Modern Burn Therapy". The meeting enabled participants to develop and plan new collaborations and clinical trials for thyroid cancer patients. ITOG's 2015 Annual Meeting will be held in Rome, Italy.

Putting the 'I' in ITOG



Since its inception in 2006, ITOG has seen tremendous growth in coordinating a multidisciplinary team of physicians and basic scientists focused on developing thyroid cancer clinical trials, mentoring the next generation of leaders in thyroid cancer research and clinical care, and raising public awareness. In 2013 the first ITOG sponsored clinical trial was launched across multiple ITOG centers and a second clinical trial is poised to open in early 2015. Despite these achievements, unexpected regulatory hurdles have resulted in delay in fully realizing an international mission, with the capability to open clinical trials outside of the United States. ITOG has recently reached a new milestone by joining forces with the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC), an independent organization dedicated to investigator-driven clinical trials and translational research. This cooperative European organization was founded in 1968 and comprises over 300 hospitals and cancer centers in over 30 countries, and includes nearly 2,500 collaborators from multiple disciplines involved in cancer treatment and research. By forming an alliance with EORTC, ITOG and its partner, the Academic and Community Cancer Research United (ACCRU), will have access to a well-established clinical trials infrastructure across Europe, enabling us to truly become an international group and carry out transatlantic research studies. This relationship was brought about through leadership from Dr. Martin Schlumberger, Dr. Steve Sherman, Mr. Dwight Vicks, and Dr. Lori Wirth of ITOG, Dr. Denis Lacombe and Sandrine Merraud of EORTC, and Dr. Axel Grothey of ACCRU.

Update Cabozantinib Clinical Trial

In the spring of 2013 ITOG opened its first clinical trial for treatment of differentiated thyroid cancer. This multi-institution clinical trial, led by Dr. Manisha H. Shah from Ohio State University, will examine whether patients who had progression of their thyroid cancer on a VEGFR inhibitor benefit from treatment with cabozantinib. To date the study has enrolled 17 of 25 planned patients. If you are interested in participating in the trial, please contact one of the study centers listed below.

Location	Principal Investigator	Phone	Email
US, District of Columbia	Stephen V. Liu	202-444-3958	stephen.v.liu@gunet.georgetown.edu
US, Florida	Robert C. Smallridge	904-953-2224	smallridge.robert@mayo.edu
US, Illinois	Jonas De Souza	773-834-1736	jonas.desouza@uchospitals.edu
US, Massachusetts	Lori J. Wirth	617-724-4000	lwirth@partners.org
US, Minnesota	Keith C. Bible	507-266-0029	bible.keith@mayo.edu
US, New York	Yujie Zhao	716-845-8568	yujie.zhao@roswellpark.org
US, Ohio	Manisha H. Shah	614-293-4680	manisha.shah@osumc.edu
US, Texas	Maria E. Cabanillas	713-563-0764	mcabani@mdanderson.org



Dr. Manisha H. Shah

Patients interested in participating in the trial can also contact Dr. Manisha H. Shah, the study's Principal Investigator, by phone: 614-293-4680 or email: manisha.shah@osumc.edu. More information related to the cabozantinib trial is available at <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01811212?term=cabozantinib+in+thyroid&rank=2> and <http://www.itog.org/itog-opens-first-clinical-trial>.



Susan and Rick Abrams

ITOG Mourns Rick Abrams

ITOG lost fellow member Rick Abrams this past June after a long and courageous battle with thyroid cancer. He was 57. Some ITOG members first knew Rick as a patient, which was a tremendous privilege. Rick had seemingly boundless energy for making the world a better place, as evidenced by his engagement with ITOG over the past several years. Beyond ITOG, Rick had a successful professional career as an innovator in educational technology, and was devoted to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and to land use in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Rick's dedication to ITOG was very deep. He helped organize and host the most recent ITOG Annual Meeting in Boston. Over the past year he worked on the website and made crucial contributions to its design and execution. Rick was passionate about social media and spearheaded ITOG's use of twitter. He also reached out to other patient advocates to share his enthusiasm in ITOG's mission.

Rick also enjoyed volunteering for ThyCa. Last year he shared his personal story that resonated so profoundly with ThyCa participants. He was also responsible for bringing Ramel Rones to Philadelphia. The success of this session inspired Rick to invite Ramel to the ITOG Annual Meeting.

Those who knew Rick as a patient and friend experienced his unending curiosity, generosity and kindness. ITOG has been so fortunate to count amongst its membership patients like Rick Abrams. His dedication inspires all ITOG members to work a little harder to catalyze a cure for thyroid cancer. Rick Abrams lived in Lexington, Massachusetts, and is survived by his wife Susan, and three children, Archie, Stan, and Sydney. As his wife, Susan, noted, Rick died with all the grace and kindness with which he lived and he was surrounded by his loving family.



Would *you* like to help?
Please visit our new website www.itog.org
or contact Dwight Vicks at dwight@itog.org

