

Peg-Intron for Good Responders

The EURAMOS-1 intergroup study trial includes risk-stratified questions for patients with osteosarcoma. Patients randomized whose tumour shows a favourable histologic response to induction chemotherapy are randomized to either receive or not receive pegylated interferon alpha (pegintron) as continuation maintenance therapy following the completion of 29 weeks of chemotherapy with cisplatin, doxorubicin and high-dose methotrexate therapy. Since the initiation of the protocol, several relevant publications have appeared supporting the value of interferon therapy in the treatment of osteosarcoma.

The EORTC 18991 study (Eggermont et al: Lancet 12; 372, 2008)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18620949> showed improvements in recurrence-free survival for patients with melanoma. The hazard ratio was 0.82 (95% confidence interval 0.71-0.96; p=0.01), a relative improvement of 18%; 4-year recurrence-free survival was 46% in the interferon group and 39% in the observation group. Over 1200 patients were randomized and PegIntron was given for up to 5 years.

A pre-clinical study (Manara MC et al: Int J Oncol 24: 365, 2004)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14719113> showed the activity of interferon against osteosarcoma cells, including relatively resistant cells. Reviews of the clinical Scandinavian experience also supported the activity of interferon as adjuvant therapy in the treatment of osteosarcoma. (Muller CR et al: Acta Oncologica 44: 475, 2005; <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16118081> Strander H: Cytokine and Growth Factor Reviews, 18: 373, 2007 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17683971>)

Although the duration of interferon therapy needed is uncertain, longer therapy is likely preferable. The relatively frequent flu-like syndrome often becomes less troublesome with time, and serious adverse events are uncommon. Investigators are urged to encourage their patients to continue interferon therapy for its intended duration.