

Glossary

adjuvant therapy

Therapy given after all of the apparent cancer is gone but microscopic disease may remain (i.e. after surgery).

angiogenesis

The formation of new blood vessels.

angiogenesis inhibitor

A therapeutic substance that may prevent the formation of blood vessels. In anticancer therapy, an angiogenesis inhibitor may prevent the growth of blood vessels from surrounding tissue to a solid tumor.

anti-angiogenesis

A process occurring at the cellular level in the body, by which the growth of new blood vessels is prevented.

cell proliferation

An increase in the number of cells as a result of cell growth and cell division.

chemotherapy

The use of chemicals to treat or control cancer.

clinical trial

A scientific study in which drugs, or combinations of drugs, are evaluated in humans. There are three main types, or Phases, of clinical trials.

cytokine

A protein that stimulates white blood cells to search and destroy bacteria, virally infected cells, and cancer cells.

efficacy

How well a drug treats an illness.

immunomodulatory

Affecting the immune system. An immunomodulatory protein like interleukin-2, for example, stimulates the immune system.

interleukin-2 (IL-2)

A protein in the human body that stimulates the immune system to do a variety of things, including the production of cancer-destroying white blood cells.

intravenous (IV)

Injection of a substance like a drug into the bloodstream through a vein.

kinase

An enzyme that plays a major role in transmitting the chemical signals required for critical cellular processes.

malignant

Cancerous.

metastases, metastasize

Metastases are cancer cells that have detached from the original cancer, metastasized (spread) to other locations in the body, and formed colonies in those places.

mutation

A change in a gene that can occur randomly or that can be deliberately caused in the laboratory by scientists.

neo-adjuvant therapy

Therapy given before definitive treatment (i.e. before surgery) to optimize curative potential of surgery.

Nexavar

An orally administered multi kinase inhibitor that targets kinases involved in tumor cell proliferation and angiogenesis.

overall response rate

The percentage of patients who had complete response (100% tumor shrinkage) to a treatment plus the percentage of patients who reach a defined degree of tumor shrinkage on drug treatment compared to the size of their tumors before treatment. Two different standard definition criteria are the WHO and RECIST criteria.

pathway

A system of proteins that work together. For example, a pathway could include protein A which sends a signal to protein B, which sends a signal to protein C, and so on until a biological effect occurs.

Phase I

A clinical trial that usually tests a new treatment in a small number of patients in order to determine the safety and appropriate dose of the new treatment.

Phase II

A clinical trial that usually tests a new treatment in a small number of patients who have the illness that the drug is designed to treat. Phase II trials measure efficacy as well as safety.

Phase III

A clinical trial that definitively tests a new treatment, usually in a large number of patients who have the illness that the drug is designed to treat. Phase III trials measure efficacy as well as safety as compared to the standard of care.

progression

Worsening of a cancer. The opposite of regression.

receptor

A molecule on the surface of a cell. Most receptors are types of proteins.

regimen

A treatment plan, sometimes called "protocol." A chemotherapy regimen for a cancer patient describes the types of drugs, their doses, how they are given, and how often they are given to the patient.

regression

Reduction in the size of a tumor. The opposite of progression. Regression can be partial or it can be complete (meaning that the tumor completely disappears from a particular place in the body).

systemic

Throughout the body, as opposed to "local." A drug administered systemically (intravenously, for example) travels throughout the whole body via the bloodstream.

therapeutic

Something that treats disease or injury.

therapy (therapies)

Treatment(s).

toxicity

The quality of being toxic or poisonous, causing damage to liver, kidneys, heart, or other organs. Another name for some types of side effects.

tumor

An abnormal growth. A malignant tumor is a cancer that can spread to other parts of the body; a benign tumor does not spread to other parts of the body.

well tolerated

A way to describe a treatment that has few or no serious side effects.