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Training and education in Oncology

Oncology is the medical specialty that deals with the diagnosis and treatment of solid tumors as well as hematological malignancies. Although the “war against cancer”, which was declared by Nixon in 1971 has not been won yet, many diagnostic and therapeutic improvements have highly improved survival and quality of life of cancer patients. With the introduction and addition of monoclonal antibodies and other adjuvant drugs to classical antineoplastic chemotherapy, the range of possible therapeutic combinations has widened dramatically and it is safe to say that the field of oncology is undergoing a paradigmatical change in its approach towards cancer. For decades the main focus has been on the three cornerstones of cancer therapy; surgery, cytotoxic chemotherapy and radiation therapy. This three dimensional approach is still up-to-date, but the focus is shifting towards providing an individualised therapy, known under the term of “Personalised Cancer Care”. Therefore, interdisciplinary teamwork is inevitable for a successful treatment of cancer patients. Scientific projects, such as the “Cancer Genome Project”, promise to deliver more detailed information about cancer pathogenesis and might lead to the implementation of new treatment modalities.

As one of the most progressive and dynamic fields in medicine, it takes a great amount of time and effort to keep updated on new developments in oncology. The easiest way to keep track of the enormous amount of information and progress achieved in this field is by following the annual meetings of international cancer organisations, such as the “American Society of Clinical Oncology” (ASCO) or the “European Society of Medical Oncology” (ESMO), as well as subscribing to widely known cancer journals, such as the

“Journal of Clinical Oncology”. Additionally, these organisations often offer further training for oncology fellows.

Another important asset for any clinical oncologist is education in scientific subjects, such as cancer biology, which is becoming more and more important. Many different national and international grants for research projects are being offered, for instance the “Hans und Blanca Moser-Foundation”.

The links that are stated below in this “Going International” course book give a good and comprehensive overview on some of the hot topics and best sites for further education in oncology, although it is a partial listing. Nevertheless, it is helpful in giving some kind of direction in the spacious field of oncology.

Interesting websites:

<http://www.asco.org/>

<http://www.esmo.org/>

<http://jco.ascopubs.org/>

<http://www.meduniwien.ac.at/Hans-und-Blanca-Moser-Stiftung/>