From the ASCO President

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Bridging the Gap Between Basic Research and Patient Care

Several hundred targeted cancer therapies are under development, and new discoveries are being made in cancer research laboratories every day. As advances in molecular oncology continue, it becomes critically important for oncologists to understand the biology behind individual therapies in order to select strategies that will have the maximum therapeutic potential for their patients. ASCO has increased its focus on translational research in response to the rapidly emerging field of targeted therapy, and this year, the theme of our Annual Meeting is "Translating Research Into Practice." The meeting, as well as other developing initiatives, is designed to help oncologists traverse the bridge between basic research findings and the care of patients with cancer.

Many important findings from translational research have been presented and discussed at the ASCO annual meetings over the past few years. This year, ASCO has undertaken additional efforts to ensure that translational research is integrated throughout the scientific and educational presentations at the meeting. To accomplish this, we actively solicited abstracts from translational researchers and invited the best and brightest scientists in pharmacogenomics, biomarkers, and molecular imaging to submit abstracts of their studies. In addition, ASCO enhanced the meeting abstract review process by asking experts in translational research to serve on a special committee to assess the translational research abstracts submitted to the meeting.

As a result of these efforts, nearly 800 translational research abstracts were submitted to the 2007 Annual Meeting, an increase of more than 13% over last year's submissions in this category. In addition to being presented in scientific sessions, many of these abstracts will be featured in clinical science symposia. These symposia provide a forum for science in oncology by combining the presentation of the latest research findings with a discussion of the findings in the context of existing knowledge and applicability to clinical practice. An unprecedented number of clinical science symposia will be offered this year, with more than 25 such sessions held over the course of the meeting. Some of the clinical science symposia cut across disease entities and focus on types of targets or targeted therapies, whereas others focus on different targeted approaches to a specific disease. Many educational sessions at the meeting also will address various aspects of targeted therapy, from dermatologic toxicities to the clinical readiness of molecular diagnostic tools.

The annual meeting is but one of several ASCO initiatives to help move novel cancer therapies more quickly from the laboratory to the clinic. This fall, ASCO will host its first symposium devoted specifically to breast cancer, with an emphasis on new discoveries and developments in translational research in that disease setting. This multidisciplinary educational event, to be held September 7-8, 2007, in San Francisco, is cosponsored by the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology and the Society of Surgical Oncology. The addition of this event to ASCO's roster of programs reflects the success of the Society's small, themed meetings, made popular by the enhanced opportunities for discussion and interaction with faculty. With its focus on translational research, the 2007 Breast Cancer Symposium is designed to expose participants to the latest research and a discussion of the implications for current and ongoing practice. The symposium will also provide a forum for a discussion of practical obstacles (regulatory issues, insurance) in providing care.

ASCO's initiatives to help promote greater understanding of translational research are guided by recommendations developed by the Society's Translational Research Task Force. This Task Force was established in 2005 to advise ASCO leadership and committees on how to enhance ASCO's programmatic content (research, education, and training) that brings value to members. Among some of the recommendations being considered are enhancing the representation of translational research in ASCO publications, including experts on biomarkers and molecular imaging in the faculty of the ASCO/AACR Methods in Clinical Cancer Research Workshop, and incorporating education on translational research topics into the curriculum of oncology training programs. Lastly, ASCO is working to attract all investigators involved in translational research, regardless of their specialty and affiliation (academic, private practice, industry, and government), to participate in ASCO and thus enrich our Society's activities.

As exciting progress continues in oncology translational research, community-based oncologists play an important role. Practicing oncologists engaged in clinical trial research are essential as we embark on large phase III trials to validate a number of biomarkers available now and in the near future. Most important, the delivery of high-quality care depends on a sound understanding of cutting-edge technology and the latest advances in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. I encourage you to become involved in clinical trial research that will help define new optimal therapies and to take advantage of the educational opportunities that ASCO provides.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Hortobagyi". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

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