
Recent Results
in Cancer Research

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Paediatric Oncology

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With 28 Figures and 38 Tables



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Preface

This publication brings together a number of papers presented at the Fourth Symposium on Clinical Oncology held at the Royal College of Radiologists, London, in February 1982. The subject of the meeting was paediatric oncology, and its objective was to provide an up-to-date review of the management of children with leukaemia and the more common forms of childhood cancer.



Cancer in childhood is fortunately uncommon. The descriptive statistics of these diseases in the United Kingdom, and in many other countries from which data are available, are presented in some detail. Some remarkable differences in the incidence of the leukaemias, for example, are recorded throughout the world. Further studies of the reasons for such differences hopefully may provide some insight into the causation of these diseases.

The leukaemias represent the most common form of neoplasia recorded in the Manchester Children's Tumour Registry, accounting for almost one third of all childhood cancers. Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is the most common type of leukaemia in children in all countries for which we have adequate data, with the exception of Japan. A masterful review of the achievements in the management of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is given by Professor R. M. Hardisty. This was his topic for the George Edelstyn Memorial Lecture which is given each year during the Symposium. The continuing improvement in the remission rates of these patients is a remarkable triumph

of multi-disciplinary collaboration in management. It has also been the result of many well designed and superbly conducted randomly controlled trials. It is hoped that these symposia will encourage further collaboration, both in clinical research and in the general care of these patients.

Unfortunately increasing success in the management of leukaemia and other childhood cancer is not achieved without considerable morbidity. The psychological sequelae of childhood leukaemia are described, and the effects on parents and siblings are discussed. Constructive suggestions are made about supportive measures for the whole family during the first few months of treatment. Thereafter some families may need more specific help, but clearly further research is necessary to define the most effective intervention in these circumstances. The late physical sequelae of the treatment of children with leukaemia and other forms of cancer are also described with consideration of the improved techniques that may help to minimise or avoid these effects.

A general review is given of the pathology and natural history of childhood tumours. The management of children with tumours of the brain, lymphomas, soft tissue sarcomas, bone tumours, Wilms' tumour and neuroblastoma are in turn discussed, together with descriptions of new approaches that are being evaluated.

The best results of management undoubtedly are recorded by large groups, who, by their greater experience and concentration of special skills and expertise, achieve higher rates of remission commonly associated with lower rates of serious morbidity. This approach to the management of children with cancer is also relevant to the care of adults, particularly with the less common forms of cancer. The systemic adjuvant treatment of children with Wilms' tumour has also had an important conceptual influence on the management of many adult tumours. And so, although this group of diseases represents only a very small part of clinical oncology, the management of children's tumours is an important and fascinating subject which should be of general interest to all oncologists.

I have to express my gratitude to all those who took part in the Symposium and to their colleagues who have collaborated in writing the manuscripts which are published in this volume. I am indebted to them not only for providing the material but for their understanding in the editing of the texts in order to achieve a uniform style and format throughout the publication. I would also record my appreciation to Mr. Michael Jackson of Springer-Verlag for his support, and to Ms. Jane Teather for her expert editorial assistance. And finally I am most grateful to my personal secretary, Mrs. Joyce Young, for her constant support in the organisation of the Symposium and in the preparation of the scripts and editorial material for publication.

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