

A Review From the 10th Annual International Lung Cancer Congress

groups of North America, the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG)⁸; the National Cancer Institute of Canada Clinical Trial Group (NCIC-CTG) directed the BR.21, which led to approval of the anti-EGFR targeted agent erlotinib¹⁰; and one of the key trials showing a benefit from adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage disease was led by NCIC-CTG,¹¹ highlighting the critical role the North American cooperative oncology groups, as well as cooperative groups abroad, have played in establishing the current standards of care for patients with NSCLC.

Within the United States, there are 4 general oncology cooperative groups active in lung cancer research sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, with member institutions scattered throughout the country: Cancer and Leukemia Group B (CALGB), ECOG, the North Central Cancer Treatment Group (NCCTG), and the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG). Within Canada, the NCIC-CTG oversees cooperative oncology clinical trials. More modality-focused cooperative groups in North America (both in the United States and Canada) include the American College of Surgeons Oncology Group (ACOSOG) and the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG). Europe has multiple cooperative groups within each country, but the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) works across borders for important trials. Most Asian countries also have cooperative group efforts, with the work in Japan highlighted in this article, particularly that of the Japanese Clinical Oncology Group (JCOG).

The newest advances in lung cancer treatment have been toward more personalized therapy of the disease. Patients with activating mutations in EGFR have a known increased sensitivity to the tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs) that target the pathway, gefitinib and erlotinib. The recently published IPASS (Iressa Pan Asia Study) looked at first-line gefitinib versus chemotherapy for clinically selected patients more likely to have these mutations and found that for those with the mutations, gefitinib improved progression-free survival (PFS) more than chemotherapy.¹² A recent effort from one of the Japanese cooperative groups added further to this observation in a trial that only included patients with EGFR mutations and found a very robust benefit to the first-line gefitinib.¹³ Ongoing efforts within other cooperative groups are looking for other markers of benefit from the EGFR inhibitors.

Better selection of specific chemotherapy drugs for individual patients is another area of active investigation within the cooperative group system. The cooperative groups are also focused on novel therapeutic agents, particularly the TKIs targeting VEGF receptor (VEGFR) and others. Most trials looking at novel agents are also designed to determine biomarkers that will predict which patients are most likely to benefit from individual drugs.

This report explores cooperative group research strategies in NSCLC (Tables 1 and 2), small-cell lung cancer (SCLC; Table 3), and mesothelioma as presented at the 10th Annual Lung Cancer Congress. The group's efforts are presented in alphabetical order by group name. Further details about the open studies can be found online at clinicaltrials.gov.

American College of Surgeons Oncology Group

The stated purpose of the ACOSOG is to evaluate the surgical management of patients with malignant solid tumors. ACOSOG

includes surgeons and other oncology specialists throughout the United States and internationally. The aims of the thoracic committee of this group are to improve local control in early-stage NSCLC and to enhance therapeutic efficacy through biologic and molecular markers.

Ongoing ACOSOG trials in early-stage NSCLC explore alternatives to lobectomy in patients who are high-risk surgical candidates. Z4032 is a randomized phase III trial of sublobar resection with or without brachytherapy in high-risk patients (based on pulmonary function and medical comorbidity) with stage IA/IB NSCLC ≤ 3 cm in size. Brachytherapy is administered by placement of a mesh with iodine-125 (¹²⁵I) seeds at the resection margin. The study opened in July 2005 and to date has accrued over 200 of the target 226 patients, with completion expected in 2009. The primary and secondary endpoints will be time to local recurrence, treatment-related toxicity, overall survival (OS), disease-free survival (DFS), impact of complete resection, pulmonary function, and quality of life.

Z4033 is a pilot study assessing the efficacy of a nonsurgical local thermal ablation treatment modality, radiofrequency ablation, in patients with stage IA NSCLC who are not operative candidates based on poor pulmonary function or other significant comorbidities. The primary and secondary objectives are local recurrences at 2 years and regional and distant recurrence. The trial opened in September 2006 and, by June 2009, had accrued 43 patients of its target enrollment of 55, with completion expected in 2009.

There are currently 2 proposed studies in ACOSOG for patients with limited mediastinal nodal metastasis. The first is a prospective phase II trial of surgical resection and postoperative chemotherapy in patients with single-station N2 disease by clinical staging studies, ie, computed tomography (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), and mediastinoscopy and/or endobronchial ultrasound transbronchial needle biopsy. This is intended as a feasibility study with the primary objective of evaluating the effectiveness of the above clinical staging modalities. It also includes a correlative science endpoint of predicting chemotherapy sensitivity by genetic markers of chemotherapy resistance in tumor tissue.

The second addresses the role of postoperative radiation therapy (PORT) after resection of clinically early-stage NSCLC with initially unsuspected mediastinal nodal metastasis. Although uncontrolled retrospective studies suggest a survival benefit to PORT in addition to that of postoperative chemotherapy in this setting, prospective, randomized data are lacking. This question is currently being addressed in a large, international, randomized phase III study of PORT versus observation in patients with surgically detected N2 disease, the LungART (Lung Adjuvant Radiotherapy Trial), primarily involving European cooperative groups and participating institutions (discussed further in the EORTC section). The ACOSOG has proposed coordinating a North American Intergroup study of PORT, which will also be a randomized phase III trial comparing PORT (conformal radiation therapy to 50.4 Gy over 6 weeks, with a boost of 10.8 Gy if there is nodal extracapsular extension) with observation. The primary endpoint will be OS, with secondary endpoints of treatment-related toxicity, local control, DFS, and patterns of recurrence.

Although surgery typically is not a primary treatment modality for SCLC, there are data to support its role in very limited stage. A prospective study of surgery for clinical stage IA SCLC is proposed, with

Table 1 Open Cooperative Group Phase III Trials in Early-Stage Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer

Trial	Subtype and Stage	Treatment	Outcome	Number of Patients
ACOSOG Z4032	Stage I NSCLC, poor PFT	Sublobar resection with or without brachytherapy seeds (¹²⁵ I)	Recurrence	226
CALGB 140503	Stage IA ≤ 2 cm	Lobectomy versus sublobar resection	DFS	1297
CALGB 30506	Stage I 2-6 cm	Observation versus adjuvant chemotherapy; stratification by lung metagene score	OS	1294
ECOG 1505	Resected stage IB-IIIa	4 Cycles of adjuvant chemotherapy with or without bevacizumab	OS	1500
ECOG 5597	Resected stage I	Selenium versus placebo × 4 years	Recurrence	1960
EORTC LungART	Resected N2	With or without postoperative radiation therapy	DFS	700
JCOG0707	Stage I > 2 cm	UFT versus S-1	OS	960
JCOG0802	Stage I < 2 cm	Segmentectomy versus lobectomy	OS	1100
RTOG 0617	Locally advanced	Carboplatin/paclitaxel/XRT with or without cetuximab with or without high-dose XRT (74 Gy)	OS	500

Abbreviations: ¹²⁵I = iodine-125; ACOSOG = American College of Surgeons Oncology Group; CALGB = Cancer and Leukemia Group B; DFS = disease-free survival; ECOG = Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group; EORTC = European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer; JCOG = Japanese Cooperative Oncology Group; NSCLC = non-small-cell lung cancer; OS = overall survival; PFT = pulmonary function test; RTOG = Radiation Therapy Oncology Group; UFT = uracil-tegafur; XRT = radiation therapy

endpoints being clinical to pathologic stage correlation, OS, DFS, and translational research through tissue and serum collection.

Cancer and Leukemia Group B

CALGB 9633 was a crucial trial for our understanding of the adjuvant therapy benefit in stage IB NSCLC. To date, CALGB 9633 is the only large platinum-based adjuvant chemotherapy trial exclusively targeting stage IB disease.^{14,15} The study compared surgical resection with or without adjuvant paclitaxel/carboplatin. Though results failed to show a statistically significant OS benefit, patients with tumors ≥ 4 cm in size did appear to have benefit (hazard ratio [HR], 0.66; 90% CI, 0.45-0.97; *P* = .04).¹⁶

Other early-stage trials by CALGB include the recently completed C39904, looking at dose-escalated, accelerated, 3-dimensional conformal radiation therapy (3D-CRT) in patients with inoperable stage I NSCLC. Ongoing studies include C140203, a phase II trial assessing intraoperative sentinel lymph node mapping using Technetium Tc 99 sulfur colloid in 150 patients with stage I NSCLC, and C140503, looking at lesser resections for small stage I tumors. Lobar resection at this time is the standard approach for stage I NSCLC,¹⁷ but in this era, especially in small peripheral primary tumors, questions have been raised about the necessity of these extensive resections. C140503 is a phase III trial with a target enrollment of nearly 1300 patients, comparing lobectomy with sublobar resection for small stage IA NSCLC (≤ 2 cm in size) with stratifications based on tumor size, histology, and smoking status. Patients are randomized to lobectomy by open thoracotomy or video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS) versus a wedge resection or anatomic segmentectomy by open thoracotomy or VATS. A preresection mediastinoscopy is required to confirm N0 status by frozen section examination of nodal levels 4, 7, and 10 on the right side and 5, 6, 7, and 10 on the left side.

Another large adjuvant therapy effort led by CALGB is C30506, a randomized phase III trial (N = 1294) for patients with resected stage I NSCLC 2-6 cm in size, who are randomized to observation or adjuvant chemotherapy after complete resection. Patients will be stratified based on a genomics prognostic model known as the lung

metagene score (LMS).¹⁸ Patients with a low LMS are felt to be at low risk for recurrence. The study will require fresh tissue collection for RNA extraction.

The CALGB has been a leader in establishing current guidelines for the therapy of stage III NSCLC and the importance of combined chemoradiation. Current efforts include C30106, looking at targeted agents as radiosensitizers, which will lead into 30605, a larger trial of induction chemotherapy with radiation and erlotinib for patients with stage III PS 2; C30407, which assessed novel chemoradiation therapy with or without cetuximab and was presented at ASCO this year¹⁹; and C30105, assessing high-dose radiation to 74 Gy, leading into C30609, a randomized phase III Intergroup trial discussed further in the RTOG section herein (RTOG 0617).

The eicosanoid pathway has been of particular interest to CALGB. In their first effort to modulate this pathway, the phase II CALGB 30203 trial used carboplatin/gemcitabine as a backbone regimen and added either zileuton, celecoxib, or both.²⁰ No OS benefit was found in any of the arms in an unselected group, and the study failed to meet its primary endpoint; however, immunohistochemistry (IHC) analysis for COX (cyclooxygenase)-2 indicated that high levels were a positive predictor for benefit with celecoxib (improved survival with an OS HR of 0.294; *P* = .004 for those with elevated COX-2 levels with or without celecoxib) but an overall negative prognostic factor for survival in all patients (OS HR, 2.51; *P* = .023 for elevated COX-2 levels). This result has led to development of CALGB 30801 for patients with previously untreated advanced-stage NSCLC with elevated COX-2 levels who receive a platinum doublet (carboplatin/gemcitabine or carboplatin/pemetrexed at investigators' discretion) and are randomized to celecoxib or placebo until progression. The selection of only those with elevated COX-2 levels is a step toward more individualized patient care.

The TALENT (Tarceva Lung Cancer Investigation outside of the United States) and TRIBUTE (Tarceva Lung Cancer Investigation within the United States) trials of erlotinib plus first-line chemotherapy failed to show a survival advantage with the combination, but the small number of never-smokers in the TRIBUTE study did show an OS advantage with the addition of erlotinib (10.1 months

Table 2 Cooperative Group Phase III Trials in Advanced-Stage Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer

Trial	Selection	Treatment	Number of Patients
CALGB 30801	Elevated COX-2	Platinum doublet with or without celecoxib	TBD
CALGB 30607	—	Sunitinib vs. placebo maintenance	240
E5508 ^a	Nonsquamous	Bevacizumab vs. pemetrexed vs. both as maintenance	TBD
EORTC-EURTAC	EGFR mutation	Erlotinib vs. platinum doublet chemotherapy	146
EORTC-BREC	First-line	Customized chemotherapy by BRCA1	432
WJTOG 3605	First-line	Carboplatin/paclitaxel vs. carboplatin/S-1	600
N0723 MARVEL	Second-line	Erlotinib vs. pemetrexed; stratified by EGFR-FISH	1200
NCIC-CTG BR.29	First-line	Carboplatin/paclitaxel with or without cediranib 20 mg	750
SWOG S0819 ^a	EGFR ⁻ /IHC ⁺	Chemotherapy (plus bevacizumab if eligible) with or without cetuximab	1545

^aPlanned.

Abbreviations: CALGB = Cancer and Leukemia Group B; COX-2 = cyclooxygenase-2; EGFR = epidermal growth factor receptor; EORTC = European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer; FISH = fluorescence in situ hybridization; IHC = immunohistochemistry; NCIC-CTG = National Cancer Institute of Canada Clinical Trials Group; SWOG = Southwest Oncology Group; TBD = to be determined; WJTOG = West Japan Thoracic Oncology Group

vs. 22.5 months with erlotinib).²¹ CALGB 30406 was designed to further explore this observation and was a randomized phase II study of never-smoker (< 100 cigarettes in their lifetime) and light smoker (< 10 pack-years and quit over 1 year ago) smoker patients with newly diagnosed advanced-stage NSCLC. Patients were randomized to either receive daily oral erlotinib or 6 cycles of carboplatin/paclitaxel plus erlotinib followed by erlotinib. In both arms, the erlotinib was continued until disease progression. The trial is now closed to enrollment and will include extensive correlative evaluation of EGFR mutational status, *EGFR* expression by IHC and fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) and *KRAS* mutation status in addition to proteomic analysis.

Cancer and Leukemia Group B is focusing heavily on studies with the VEGFR TKI sunitinib. Sunitinib is approved for the treatment of patients with gastrointestinal stromal tumors and renal cell carcinoma and has demonstrated encouraging single-agent activity in NSCLC.²² To build on this, 4 randomized trials are either under way or in development using sunitinib. CALGB 30607, a randomized phase III trial of 240 patients, will randomize patients with advanced-stage NSCLC who have stable or responding disease after 4 cycles of a platinum doublet to either sunitinib 37.5 mg/day or placebo. The maintenance therapy (sunitinib or placebo) is continued until disease progression, with a planned follow-up to at least 1 year. Progression-free survival is the primary endpoint. Patients may receive bevacizumab with the 4 cycles of chemotherapy, but the bevacizumab must be discontinued at the time of randomization to sunitinib or placebo. Patients who do not enroll in 30607 are eligible for the randomized phase II study 30704, with a target enrollment of just over 200 patients. This study is also powered to look at PFS but will enroll previously treated patients to receive either pemetrexed alone (500 mg/m² every 3 weeks), sunitinib alone (37.5 mg orally daily), or the combination of both agents at full doses. The other sunitinib trials are C30804, which compares sunitinib with pemetrexed in elderly patients (aged < 75 years) with a good PS; C30602, a window-of-opportunity study with the drug in extensive-stage SCLC; and C30504, a randomized phase II study of sunitinib or placebo maintenance after completion of 6 cycles of platinum/etoposide chemotherapy for patients with extensive-stage SCLC.

In SCLC, C30610 is open to patients with limited-stage disease. All patients will receive standard cisplatin/etoposide chemotherapy and prophylactic cranial irradiation (PCI). The randomization is to 1 of 3 radiation strategies, to start with the first cycle of chemotherapy. The 3 radiation regimens are standard 45 Gy twice daily over 3 weeks compared with either 61.2 Gy given on a daily fractionation schedule (no weekends) over 5 weeks or 70 Gy given in daily fractions over 7 weeks. The primary endpoint is OS.

Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group

E1505, which opened in June 2007 with an accrual goal of 1500 patients, has accrued nearly 500 patients to date and is the largest adjuvant trial within the cooperative group system. The study is open to patients with resected stage IB ≥ 4 cm–IIIA NSCLC of any histology and stratifies by stage, histology, sex, and chemotherapy regimen. A minimum mediastinal lymph node sampling, to include level 7 for all patients, level 4 for right-sided tumors, and level 5 or 6 for left-sided tumors, is required for adequate staging. Patients receive 1 of 4 cisplatin-based doublet regimens for 4 cycles and are randomized to receive either bevacizumab 15 mg/kg every 3 weeks continued for 1 year or no additional therapy beyond the 4 cycles of chemotherapy. The primary endpoint is OS. Extensive correlative studies are planned, with blood and tissue specimens being collected from all patients.

E5597, an ongoing Intergroup chemoprevention trial, randomizes patients with completely resected stage I NSCLC, 6–36 months postresection, to 4 years of selenium supplementation (200 µg as selenized yeast) versus placebo (N = 1960). The study now allows for adjuvant chemotherapy before enrollment. Multiple correlative studies including methylation of p16 and O6-methylguanine-DNA methyltransferase are built into the trial, which is nearing its enrollment goal.

Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group's recent major effort for locally advanced NSCLC was E3598, which looked at the addition of thalidomide to concurrent chemotherapy/radiation, using a carboplatin/paclitaxel backbone. Thalidomide, an antiangiogenic agent, failed to improve either PFS or OS but led to increased thrombosis and will not be further developed in this setting.²³

Table 3 Small-Cell Lung Cancer Phase III Trials^a

Trial	Selection	Treatment	Number of Patients
EORTC 08072/BR.26 (CONVERT)	LS	66 Gy daily fractions vs. 45 Gy twice-daily fractions	532
JCOG0202	LS	Cisplatin/etoposide/XRT with consolidation PE vs. cisplatin/irinotecan	250
JCOG0509	ES, first-line	Cisplatin/amrubicin vs. cisplatin/irinotecan	282
JCOG0605	ES, second-line	Nogitecan vs. PE/irinotecan	180
SWOG S0938	ES	PE with or without cediranib	600

^aOther novel agents in earlier phases of development for SCLC include GDC-0449, Hedgehog pathway inhibitor; cixutumumab (IMC-A12), insulin-like growth factor receptor inhibitor; sunitinib, vascular endothelial growth factor receptor inhibitor, and others.

Abbreviations: EORTC = European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer; ES = extensive-stage; JCOG = Japanese Cooperative Oncology Group; LS = limited-stage; PE = platinum/etoposide; SCLC = small-cell lung cancer; SWOG = Southwest Oncology Group; XRT = radiation therapy

The issue of maintenance chemotherapy has become an important topic in the treatment of patients with advanced-stage NSCLC, with several trials now showing an improvement in PFS with this approach^{24,25} and 1 showing a definite OS benefit.²⁵ The question of how long to continue bevacizumab has also been raised repeatedly, and ECOG's attempt to look further at these issues is the E5508 randomized phase III trial for patients with chemotherapy-naïve, nonsquamous, bevacizumab-eligible advanced-stage NSCLC. The study will randomize patients who have at least stable disease (SD) after completing 4 cycles of carboplatin/paclitaxel/bevacizumab to bevacizumab alone, or pemetrexed alone, or a combination of the two.

Also building on the E4599 platform but focused in a select group of patients, E2507 is currently in development for patients without a smoking history with previously untreated advanced-stage NSCLC. Eligible patients will receive carboplatin/paclitaxel (with or without bevacizumab, depending on bevacizumab eligibility) with a randomization to receive concurrent erlotinib or not. In the ECOG 2507 trial, all patients receive chemotherapy with randomization to erlotinib or not, in contrast to the otherwise similar CALGB 30406, in which all patients receive erlotinib with randomization to chemotherapy or not. E3503 will also use erlotinib as first-line therapy for NSCLC, building on work with a proteomic analysis that predicts for response to erlotinib.²⁶

Other novel agents under investigation include cetuximab and cixutumumab (IMC-A12), an antibody against the insulin-like growth factor receptor-1 (IGF-1R). E4508 randomizes 180 newly diagnosed patients with advanced-stage NSCLC to receive either carboplatin/paclitaxel with cetuximab, cixutumumab, or both in a "pick-the-winner" design looking for a 2-month improvement in PFS. E3508 will also look at the addition of cixutumumab in patients with newly diagnosed advanced-stage NSCLC but with the addition of bevacizumab as well. This randomized phase II study of 180 patients, looking for PFS improvement, randomized patients to receive carboplatin/paclitaxel/bevacizumab (E4599 regimen) with or without intravenous cixutumumab 6 mg/kg weekly.

Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group has recently opened E1508, looking at 2 exciting novel pathways in the therapy of SCLC. This randomized phase II study uses a backbone regimen of cisplatin/etoposide for patients with newly diagnosed extensive-stage SCLC. The 3-arm study includes a reference arm and 2 experimental arms adding either GDC-0449, an inhibitor of the

Hedgehog pathway or cixutumumab, the inhibitor of IGF-1R discussed above, to the cisplatin/etoposide backbone.

European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer

Nearly every country in Europe has at least 1 country-based cooperative group, and most have 10-20 phase III trials open in NSCLC at the current time. The EORTC spans multiple European countries and has been a leader in several critical lung cancer trials.

There remains significant controversy about the use of PORT for resected stage IIIA NSCLC. Despite guidelines supporting the use of PORT, and encouraging data from a recent subset analysis of the ANITA (Adjuvant Navelbine International Trialist Association) trial²⁷ and the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results database,²⁸ prospective, randomized data supporting this modality are lacking. The LungART trial (EORTC 2205-08053), initiated by the French cooperative group, will include broad participation by the EORTC, NCIC-CTG, and others. Enrollees are randomized to receive a dose of 54 Gy in 30 fractions to the thorax or no adjuvant radiation therapy after complete resection of stage IIIA (N2 involved) NSCLC. The study is aimed for patients with unexpected N2 disease discovered at the time of surgical resection. Patients are stratified for postoperative (or preoperative) chemotherapy (to be completed before randomization to radiation). Target enrollment is > 700 to show a 10% improvement in 3-year DFS (30%-40%), with extensive correlates included.

Most of the efforts of EORTC in lung cancer are in metastatic disease. A study focused in elderly patients (aged > 70 years), EORTC 08086, is a randomized phase II trial evaluating the standard agent vinorelbine versus albumin-bound paclitaxel.

In the move toward more personalized care, many European groups, including EORTC, will be supporting the EURTAC (European Randomized Trial of Tarceva vs. Chemotherapy) study, led by the Spanish Lung Cancer Group, for newly diagnosed patients with NSCLC with known EGFR-activating mutations comparing first-line erlotinib 150 mg/day versus a standard platinum doublet (4 standard options), followed by a crossover. Additionally, EORTC is participating in the BREC (BRCA1 Expression Customization) trial, also led by the Spanish Lung Cancer Group, which is open to patients with newly diagnosed NSCLC. The study is looking at customizing chemotherapy by assigning therapy to patients on the experimental arm based on RAP80 levels and BRCA1 levels, which

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predict response or lack of response to cisplatin and docetaxel, compared with a standard arm of docetaxel/cisplatin for all patients.

In SCLC, there are the EORTC08061 and EORTC08062 trials. EORTC08061 looks at the VEGFR TKI sunitinib 37.5 mg orally daily continuously as either first- or second-line therapy in patients with extensive-stage SCLC. This is a window-of-opportunity type trial in 48 patients (24 first-line and 24 second-line) with stopping after 4 weeks based on PET/CT results at that time. EORTC08062 is a nearly completed randomized phase II study looking at the new anthracycline amrubicin with or without cisplatin versus cisplatin/etoposide. The results of this study will be used to design a randomized phase III trial comparing the winning arm with standard cisplatin/etoposide. EORTC will also participate in the CONVERT (Concurrent ONce-daily VErsus twice-daily RadioTherapy; EORTC 08072) exploring 66 Gy in daily fractions versus the standard 45 Gy in twice-daily fractions with cisplatin/etoposide chemotherapy (radiation start with cycle 2) for limited-stage SCLC. It is hoped that this randomized phase III trial will enroll 532 patients.

The EORTC has also been active in mesothelioma. The results of EORTC08031 were presented at the ASCO 2009 annual meeting. This study looked at using extrapleural pneumonectomy with consolidation radiation after 3 courses of chemotherapy. The study found a 42% success rate as defined by patients being alive and without grade 3 or 4 toxicity at 90 days, which fell short of the predefined 50% success rate needed to call the trial positive.²⁹ E08052 is an ongoing mesothelioma single-arm phase II study of bortezomib plus cisplatin as first-line therapy and is accruing well, having passed the initial hurdle in a Simon 2-stage design with PFS at 18 weeks as the endpoint.

Japanese Cooperative Groups, Including the Japanese Clinical Oncology Group

For early-stage NSCLC, Japanese cancer cooperative groups have focused on the oral fluorinated pyrimidine uracil-tegafur (UFT) as the adjuvant therapy of choice, especially in patients with stage I adenocarcinoma. Traditionally, the drug has been given for 2 years as daily oral therapy. The HR for survival for UFT given as adjuvant therapy for patients with stage I NSCLC in a meta-analysis of 6 trials (95% stage I, N > 2000) was 0.73 (95% CI, 0.58-0.92; $P = .0066$).³⁰ The current major adjuvant effort is JCOG0707, open to patients with resected stage I tumors (> 2 cm), who are randomized to either 2 years of UFT or 1 year of S-1 (another 5-fluorouracil derivative) as adjuvant therapy after complete resection (N = 960). The West Japan Thoracic Oncology Group (WJTOG) 0101 study is a recently completed randomized phase III trial (N = 600) of UFT versus gemcitabine as adjuvant therapy, with results pending.

Japanese Clinical Oncology Group has several surgical-based studies for early-stage NSCLC. Patients with ground-glass opacities (GGOs) < 2 cm in size undergo a wide wedge resection, provided there is < 25% of the lesion that is solid. These lesions are considered noninvasive cancer, and the endpoint will be recurrence-free survival. For patients with invasive NSCLC (< 2 cm and \geq 25% consolidation if the lesion is a GGO), JCOG0802 randomizes patients to limited surgery (segmentectomy) versus lobectomy, each with lymph node dissection (N = approximately 1100). The primary endpoint is OS.

For patients with locally advanced NSCLC, the phase I/II study JCOG0402 will evaluate cisplatin/vinorelbine with radiation followed by gefitinib in 37 patients. JCOG0301 is open for elderly patients with stage III NSCLC to receive radiation alone or in combination with carboplatin, with an OS endpoint (N = 200). The WJTOG recently presented a randomized phase III (WJTOG 0105) trial looking at 3 different platinum-based regimens in combination with radiation therapy in locally advanced disease and found no significant differences between the doublet and triplet regimens, but increased toxicity was observed.³¹

An ongoing randomized phase III trial, WJTOG 3605, randomizes newly diagnosed patients with advanced-stage NSCLC (N = 600) to carboplatin/paclitaxel versus carboplatin/S-1. Another ongoing study, WJOG 5108L, randomized patients, regardless of EGFR mutational status, to gefitinib versus erlotinib (N = 560). WJOG 5208L randomized patients with previously untreated squamous cell lung carcinoma to either receive cisplatin/docetaxel or nedaplatin (N = 250). JCOG has another study of elderly patients in development that will compare docetaxel alone or with cisplatin for patients with newly diagnosed advanced-stage NSCLC.

The North East Japan Gefitinib Study Group, established in 2004, completed an ongoing phase III trial (N = 320) of first-line gefitinib versus carboplatin/paclitaxel for patients with advanced-stage NSCLC with known EGFR-activating mutations. In the end, 98 patients received gefitinib, and 100 patients received chemotherapy. The overall response rate was 75% with gefitinib and 29% with the chemotherapy with a significant improvement in PFS.¹³ The WJOG has a similar study, WJTOG3405, limited to patients with exon 19 deletion and L858R mutations within the EGFR, randomized to first-line gefitinib 250 mg/day or cisplatin/docetaxel every 3 weeks \times 3-6 cycles. A phase II trial limited to elderly patients aged > 75 years with advanced-stage NSCLC and known EGFR-activating mutations is also ongoing.

The JCOG has 4 ongoing/planned trials in SCLC. JCOG0202 is the primary effort in limited-stage disease. This phase III study of 250 patients will look for an OS benefit for cisplatin/etoposide with concurrent radiation therapy (1 cycle given with twice-daily fractionated radiation) followed by consolidation with 3 cycles of cisplatin/irinotecan compared with the standard cisplatin/etoposide with concurrent radiation therapy followed by consolidation with the same cisplatin/etoposide regimen for 3 cycles. For patients with extensive-stage SCLC, the first-line option is the phase III JCOG0509, which looks for an OS benefit with cisplatin 60 mg/m² on day 1 plus amrubicin 40 mg/m² days 1-3 compared with cisplatin 60 mg/m² on day 1 plus irinotecan 60 mg/m² on days 1, 8, and 15 in 282 randomized patients. The chemotherapy is given in 4-week cycles for 4 cycles. For those with sensitive relapsed SCLC, JCOG0605 is a phase III trial for 180 patients comparing nogitecan with the triplet of cisplatin/etoposide/irinotecan. Finally, in patients with refractory/relapsed SCLC, a study in development will look at the response rate in 80 patients receiving single-agent amrubicin.

National Cancer Institute of Canada Clinical Trials Group

The NCIC-CTG BR.10 trial remains one of the most positive adjuvant chemotherapy trials, even now, with 9 years of follow-up.³²

The follow-up trial, BR.19, explored the use of adjuvant gefitinib and enrolled > 500 patients before closing prematurely in 2005 based on other negative gefitinib trials (ISEL [Iressa Survival Evaluation in Lung Cancer]³³ and SWOG 0023³⁴). The primary endpoint of OS is expected to be available in the next year or so after a data-lock in April 2009. Extensive correlates with tumor tissue and blood are ongoing. The NCIC-CTG is involved in E1505 as well as E5597. The NCIC-CTG is also leading a separate economic analysis of E1505, with health utilization data collected prospectively for all Canadian patients. The NCIC-CTG will also participate in LungART (BR.27) and CALGB 140503, among other Intergroup efforts.

For patients with medically inoperable localized NSCLC, NCIC-CTG BR.25 is a just-completed study of accelerated hypofractionated 3D-CRT at doses \leq 60 Gy administered over 2.5-3 weeks. The 80 accrued patients will be followed by 5 years.

First-line advanced-stage NSCLC efforts of the NCIC-CTG thoracic group have been focused on VEGFR TKI cediranib. BR.24, a randomized phase II/III trial of first-line carboplatin/paclitaxel with or without cediranib, met its primary efficacy endpoint in phase II but with excessive toxicity observed in the cediranib arm, despite dose reductions to 30 mg daily (down from 45 mg daily). Based on those results, BR.24 was closed, but BR.29 is now open, using the same randomized phase II/III design but with a 20-mg dose of cediranib.

The predominant second-line effort of the NCIC-CTG thoracic committee will be participation in N0723 (MARVEL). For SCLC, the recently completed BR.20 looked at vandetanib, a dual EGFR and VEGFR TKI. The drug did not show superiority to placebo in this trial and will not be further developed in this manner. For limited-stage SCLC, the NCIC-CTG will participate in the CONVERT trial, discussed in the EORTC section, known within the NCIC-CTG as BR.26.

For mesothelioma, a phase II study of sunitinib is in development. The NCIC-CTG has an extensive team for correlate studies, which are an important part of all trials run within the group.

North Central Cancer Treatment Group

The NCCTG, centered at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, has participating centers in 30 states, Puerto Rico, and 2 provinces in Canada. The group is actively participating in the E1505 study for early-stage disease and other Intergroup efforts. For locally advanced NSCLC, N0321 is a phase I/II study examining the use of bortezomib in combination with paclitaxel/carboplatin and radiation therapy. Another trial in development in locally advanced disease, N0921, is for patients aged \geq 70 years with stage III NSCLC who will receive pemetrexed and cetuximab with concurrent radiation therapy.

The VEGFR TKI sorafenib is being studied as an addition to pemetrexed for second-line therapy of nonsquamous NSCLC in the N0626 trial. This randomized phase II study of pemetrexed with or without sorafenib has reached 50% of the accrual goal. N0528 is a randomized phase II first-line trial of gemcitabine and carboplatin with or without cediranib (AZD2171), another VEGFR TKI. Accrual goal is just under 100 patients, using a dose of cediranib of 30 mg.

N0723, also known as the MARVEL (MARKer Validation of Erlotinib in Lung cancer) study, is the largest NCCTG effort. This

study, which opened in October 2008, randomizes patients to either erlotinib or pemetrexed as second-line therapy for advanced NSCLC and is focused on whether PFS is improved in subsets of patients based on various biomarkers, in particular EGFR overexpression by FISH. Target accrual is 1200 patients, with the hope of finding 956 with FISH results (required for randomization). It is expected that 30% of the patients will be EGFR FISH positive and 70% will not. The study is now being modified to register patients before initiation of first-line chemotherapy, with the FISH analysis and randomization performed on all patients with \geq SD after completion of 4 cycles of a platinum doublet. This modification is in accordance with treatment pattern changes with maintenance therapy.

The only cooperative group trial focused on oligometastatic advanced-stage disease is N0724, a phase II study that randomizes patients to either observation or radiation therapy to known sites of disease after completion of 4 cycles of platinum-based chemotherapy. Another focused advanced-stage NSCLC study is N0821, a phase II study of pemetrexed, carboplatin, and bevacizumab in patients with good PS who are aged \geq 70 years.

Other concepts in development are exploring MK-0426 in advanced-stage squamous cell lung cancer, up-front thoracic radiation therapy in bulky advanced-stage NSCLC, and a phase II study of γ -secretase inhibitor R04929097 in patients with advanced-stage NSCLC.

The NCCTG has a small-cell study examining the IGF-1R antibody cixutumumab in combination with carboplatin and etoposide for extensive-stage NSCLC, N0922. All patients receive 4 cycles of carboplatin/etoposide, and all patients receive maintenance cixutumumab, with a randomization to receive the antibody either concurrently with the chemotherapy or after completion of the chemotherapy. Another small-cell study in development is N0923, using NTX-010, a replication-competent picornavirus, given after completion of chemotherapy.

Radiation Therapy Oncology Group

The stated mission of the RTOG is to improve the survival and quality of life of patients with cancer through the conduct of high-quality clinical trials that focus primarily on optimizing radiation therapy. The RTOG has a broad portfolio of trials in lung cancer from early to locally advanced stages that address the role of treatment intensification through radiation dose escalation or hypofractionation and/or combination with systemic therapies.

In early-stage lung cancer, RTOG 0236 was the first North American cooperative group trial of stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), a treatment modality involving high-precision delivery of highly conformal and dose-intensive radiation therapy to small-volume tumors, as an alternative to resection in strictly medically inoperable patients with peripherally located T1-3 tumors (< 5 cm in size without lymph node or distant metastasis). The dose was 54 Gy (corrected) in 3 fractions over 8-14 days. Between May 2004 and October 2006, the trial completed its target accrual of 55 evaluable patients. As reported at the 2009 World Congress on Lung Cancer, at a median follow-up of 25 months, the 2-year local control was 98% (with a single local failure), regional control was 100% (with 2 regional relapses that occurred after 2 years), and the OS rate was 72%. There were no treatment-related deaths and only 2 protocol-defined grade 4 toxicities.

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This has led to the initiation of RTOG 0618, a phase II study of the same SBRT regimen in patients with the same tumor characteristics but who are physiologically able to tolerate complete resection. Since December 2007, the trial has accrued approximately half of its target of 33 patients and is likely to be completed by 2010. If results are encouraging, the plan is to move forward with a randomized phase III trial of surgery versus SBRT.

Because of concerns of increased toxicity of SBRT in more centrally located tumors, the RTOG is also exploring a slightly less dose-intensive approach for tumors close to the proximal bronchial tree. RTOG 0813 is a phase I/II dose-escalation trial designed for medically inoperable patients with centrally located stage I NSCLC, with a starting dose of 50 Gy in 5 fractions. The study was activated in February 2009, with an accrual goal of 94 patients. Future plans include a randomized trial of different dose/fractionation SBRT regimens for medically inoperable early-stage lung cancer.

In locally advanced lung cancer, the RTOG completed a phase I/II study of an escalated radiation dose (74 Gy) with concurrent chemotherapy, RTOG 0117, as well as a phase II trial of escalated systemic therapy (carboplatin/paclitaxel plus cetuximab) with concurrent radiation therapy (63 Gy), RTOG 0324. In both of these studies, patients with predominantly inoperable stage IIIA/IIIB NSCLC had median survival times of 21.6 months and 22.7 months, respectively—highly promising compared with the 17-month median survival observed in RTOG 9410, the study that established concurrent chemoradiation therapy as the standard of care for locally advanced NSCLC in the RTOG. Thus, the RTOG has initiated and is the coordinating group for the Intergroup study RTOG 0617, a 4-arm phase III randomized trial of standard-dose (60 Gy) versus high-dose (74 Gy) radiation with concurrent carboplatin/paclitaxel with or without cetuximab for patients with unresectable stage IIIA/IIIB NSCLC. The study opened in November 2007 and has accrued 123 of 500 planned patients to date.

The RTOG has also coordinated a randomized phase III Intergroup study of PCI versus observation for patients without evidence of brain metastases and without progression after initial treatment for locally advanced NSCLC. RTOG 0214 closed early after failing to meet its original accrual goal of 1058 patients, but analysis of 340 randomized patients revealed a statistically significant reduction of the rate of brain metastasis from 18% to 7.7% at 1 year with PCI.³⁵ This was at the cost of decreased performance on a verbal learning test in the PCI group, but there was no significant difference in mini-mental status examination and quality of life. With the limited accrual, there was insufficient power to detect a difference in PFS or OS.

Protocols currently under development will focus on multimodality therapy. RTOG 0839 is a proposed study that will study carboplatin/paclitaxel/cetuximab with full-dose concurrent radiation therapy (61 Gy) as preoperative therapy for resectable stage IIIA disease with minimal N2 nodal metastasis. RTOG 0937 is a proposed randomized phase II study of consolidative radiation therapy to thoracic and limited extrathoracic sites after chemotherapy and PCI for extensive-stage SCLC. In addition, all of the currently active and proposed protocols include a translational research component to investigate the predictive and/or prognostic value of blood and/or urine biomarkers.

Southwest Oncology Group

Building on earlier work in superior sulcus (Pancoast) tumors, S0920 will explore the addition of cetuximab to the regimen studied in the recently completed S0220 but will include patients with more advanced disease (IIB, IIIA, and IIIB, including ipsilateral supraclavicular nodal disease, all T3 or T4). Enrolled patients will receive cisplatin 50 mg/m² on days 1, 8, 29, and 36 and etoposide 50 mg/m² on days 1-5 and 29-33 with concurrent thoracic radiation therapy of 54 Gy (the SWOG standard NSCLC regimen) in combination with cetuximab 250 mg/m² weekly after a loading dose. Patients will then proceed to surgical resection, with additional consolidation chemotherapy. The primary endpoint is the pathologic complete response rate.

Also for early-stage NSCLC, SWOG is participating in E1505 and E5597 and has other SWOG-led studies, in particular S0720, focused on personalizing adjuvant chemotherapy. S0720 is founded on work by Zheng et al,³⁶ as well as others³⁷ demonstrating that ERCC1 and RRM1 levels provide both prognostic value and predictive value for platinum-based chemotherapy in NSCLC. S0720 will test the feasibility of pharmacogenomically directed adjuvant therapy by accruing patients with completely resected stage I NSCLC (≥ 2 cm in size) and assigning therapy based on assessment of ERCC1 and RRM1 levels from the surgical specimen. The primary endpoint of S0720 is feasibility, defined by the percentage of patients who can be assigned treatment appropriately, reflecting the adequacy of tumor specimen collection and analysis.

Another early-stage NSCLC study is S0424, which is investigating the molecular epidemiology of early-stage NSCLC in smoking and nonsmoking men and women. By performing extensive tissue- and blood-based analyses on multiple pathways, this study assesses the influence of smoking, hormonal factors, and other exposures on sex differences in lung cancer. The study is nearly completed but requires more never-smoking men to finish accrual.

The major first-line NSCLC trial for SWOG is S0819, a phase III trial that will randomize patients to carboplatin/paclitaxel (plus bevacizumab in eligible patients) with or without cetuximab. The 4-drug regimen was studied in S0536 with encouraging results and promising correlate trial work.³⁸ SWOG's initial work with cetuximab, S0342, combined the agent with carboplatin/paclitaxel in different schedules with favorable results in the concurrent arm, especially in patients with EGFR overexpression by FISH analysis.³⁹ EGFR FISH analysis will be an important component of S0819, which aims to screen 1545 patients to identify adequate number of patients with EGFR expression by IHC (required for study entry) and 618 FISH-positive patients.

For patients with poor PS with advanced-stage NSCLC, S0709 will evaluate erlotinib versus erlotinib plus chemotherapy using a serum proteomics pattern suggestive of erlotinib benefit.²⁶ Patients on the chemotherapy arm will receive carboplatin/paclitaxel on day 1 then erlotinib on days 2-16 of each 21-day cycle to allow for "pharmacodynamic separation," as previously piloted at University of California, Davis.⁴⁰

Another agent that SWOG is studying is conatumumab (AMG 655), a proapoptotic agent that directly activates TRAIL-TR-2. S0810 will enroll 60 patients per arm who will be randomized to conatumumab 15 mg/kg every 3 weeks or the same dose plus pemetrexed

500 mg/m². Conatumumab is also being added to standard first-line cisplatin/pemetrexed chemotherapy either with (S0814) or without (S0813) bevacizumab with maintenance conatumumab in both studies after completion of 6 cycles of chemotherapy. S0814 will also include maintenance bevacizumab. The accrual goal is 70 patients per trial.

In SCLC, SWOG is looking at a trial of large-volume chemoradiation for limited-stage disease (S0908), and in extensive-stage disease, cediranib will be combined with cisplatin/etoposide in a randomized phase III study, S0938. S0938 will enroll 600 patients who will be randomized to standard cisplatin/etoposide chemotherapy with or without cediranib (which will be continued as a single agent after completion of 4 cycles of chemotherapy), with an OS endpoint. The study has embedded marker validation with a biomarker-embedded design. Aflibercept (VEGF Trap) and topotecan combination therapy will be studied for recurrent SCLC in S0802.

Patients with newly diagnosed mesothelioma will be eligible for S0905, which will randomize patients to cisplatin/pemetrexed with cediranib or placebo after completion of the phase I dose-escalation period. This study is building on encouraging single-agent activity of second-line cediranib for mesothelioma in the S0509 study presented at the ASCO 2009 annual meeting.⁴¹ Also in mesothelioma, S0722 is exploring the use of everolimus (RAD001).

Conclusion

The cooperative group system plays a vital role in the advancement of therapy for NSCLC, SCLC, and mesothelioma. The cooperative groups of North America have been pivotal in showing benefit with the anti-VEGF agent bevacizumab and the anti-EGFR drug erlotinib, as well as the importance of adjuvant chemotherapy among other advances. As outlined in this article, the portfolios of the groups and international cooperative groups are full of varied and important studies. The use of an antiangiogenesis approach, as seen in E1505 with adjuvant bevacizumab, in BR.29 with first-line cediranib, and in multiple other trials incorporating anti-VEGFR TKIs, is a primary focus. The groups are also very involved in investigating therapies in the EGFR pathway, including cetuximab, and better understanding of how to use erlotinib and gefitinib in patients with activating mutations and other indicators of benefit such as proteomic profiles.

The cooperative groups provide a mechanism for asking critical questions such as the value of postoperative radiation therapy and the role of lesser resections for smaller stage I tumors that would be very difficult in any other setting. One of the incredible strengths of the cooperative groups is the breadth and depth of translational science possible within trials. This translational strength is seen in the multitude of trials currently active or in development looking at real-time sample analysis of EGFR mutations, RRM1 expression, and others in the move toward personalized therapy. Multiple other targeted agents, including those targeting IGF-1R, Hedgehog, and direct inducers of apoptosis are also in trials within the cooperative group system. Within the context of the cooperative group system, the future of thoracic malignancy therapy looks promising.

Disclosures

Heather Wakelee has received research funding from Bayer Pharmaceuticals Corporation; Eli Lilly and Company; Genentech, Inc.; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; and Pfizer Inc.

Nagahiro Saijo holds stock or equity ownership in Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

Joan Schiller has received research funding from Celgene Corporation; Genentech, Inc.; Geron; Merck & Co., Inc.; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; Pfizer Inc.; and Schering-Plough Corporation and has served as a paid consultant or been on the Advisory Board of AstraZeneca; Bayer Pharmaceuticals Corporation; Biomira; Celgene Corporation; Cell Genesys, Inc.; Eli Lilly and Company; Genentech, Inc.; Genomic Health, Inc.; GlaxoSmith-Kline; ImClone Systems Incorporated; Merck & Co., Inc.; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; Pfizer Inc.; Roche Pharmaceuticals; Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; and Telik, Inc.

Bill Loo Jr. has served as a paid consultant or been on the Advisory Board of CyberHeart, Inc. and is a member of the Speaker's Bureau for Accuray Incorporated; General Electric Company; and superDimension, Ltd.

David R. Gandara has served on the Board of Directors or held other leadership positions with Response Genetics, Inc.; has received research funding from Abbott Laboratories, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, and Eli Lilly and Company; and has served as a paid consultant or been on the Advisory Board of AstraZeneca, Bayer Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Genentech, Inc., Pfizer Inc., and sanofi-aventis U.S.

Martin J. Edelman has received research funding from Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Schering-Plough Corporation, and Tragara Pharmaceuticals Inc. and has served as paid consultant or been on the Advisory Board of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company; Eli Lilly and Company; Facet Biotech Corporation; Genentech, Inc.; and Tragara Pharmaceuticals Inc.

Glenwood Goss has received research funding from AstraZeneca and Ortho Biotech Products, L.P. and has served as a paid consultant or been on the Advisory Board of AstraZeneca, Pfizer Inc., and Roche Pharmaceuticals.

Alex Adjei has received research funding from Ardea Biosciences, Inc. and Eli Lilly and Company.

Everett E. Vokes, Joe Bill Putnam Jr., and Kemp H. Kernstine have no relevant relationships to disclose.

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Cooperative Group Research Endeavors in Small-Cell Lung Cancer: Current and Future Directions

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Abstract

The International Lung Cancer Congress (ILCC), now in its ninth year, is a key forum for representatives of cooperative groups in North America, Europe, and Japan to discuss ongoing and planned clinical trials in lung cancer. Many of the significant strides in lung cancer treatment often originate from investigations designed within the cooperative group system and were a feature of the 2008 ILCC. Small-cell lung cancer (SCLC) represents 15% of all lung cancers diagnosed annually and is characterized by rapid growth kinetics, disseminated metastases, and development of chemotherapy resistance. Many questions remain regarding the optimal use of radiation therapy and approaches for enhancing the effects of chemotherapy to improve clinical outcomes. Herein, we explore and outline the scientific vision of each cooperative group's SCLC research portfolio, as presented at the 2008 ILCC. Highlights include an ongoing Intergroup phase III study exploring differing radiation therapy schemes for limited-stage SCLC and a Southwest Oncology Group 0124 trial establishing platinum/etoposide as the standard of care for untreated extensive-stage SCLC in North America. Continued research efforts sponsored by these groups will represent the future of SCLC diagnosis and management.

Clinical Lung Cancer, Vol. 10, No. 5, 322-330, 2009; DOI: 10.3816/CLC.2009.n.044

Keywords: Clinical trials, Hyperfractionation, Intergroup trials, Limited stage, Platinum resistance, Radiation therapy

Introduction

Lung cancer is a strikingly prevalent malignancy and is the leading cause of cancer-related death worldwide. Small-cell lung cancer (SCLC) represents 15% of all lung cancers, and in 2009, an estimated 32,000 new cases will be diagnosed in the United States.¹ Small-cell lung cancer is characterized by aggressive growth kinetics and disseminated metastases, with 60%-70% of patients presenting with advanced- (or "extensive-") stage disease. Despite high initial

tumor response rates following platinum-based chemotherapy, SCLC rapidly develops drug resistance, subsequently leading to tumor progression and patient death. Unfortunately, progress in SCLC management has been agonizingly slow, with a glaring lack of therapeutic advances, despite a wealth of new chemotherapeutic drug classes and targeted agents. With median survivals of 7-11 months and a 2-year survival rate of < 5% for patients with extensive-stage disease, the need to improve outcomes is apparent.²

The US cooperative groups, sponsored by the taxpayer-supported National Cancer Institute, as well as cooperative groups from Canada, Europe, and Asia, all play a critical role in overcoming the slow progress in SCLC drug development by incorporating SCLC-specific clinical trials into their respective research portfolios. Within the United States, there are 4 general oncology cooperative groups active in lung cancer research: the Cancer and Leukemia Group B (CALGB), Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG), North Central Cancer Treatment Group (NCCTG), and the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG).³ The CALGB, ECOG, and SWOG include member institutions from throughout the country, whereas NCCTG is a regional cooperative group centered at the Mayo Clinic. Within Canada, the National Cancer Institute of Canada Clinical Trials Group (NCIC-CTG) oversees cooperative oncology efforts. In addition, a focused cooperative oncology

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Submitted: Dec 23, 2008; Revised: Mar 9, 2009; Accepted: Mar 24, 2009

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group that plays a pivotal role and crosses the US/Canadian border is the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG). The 2008 International Lung Cancer Congress (ILCC), now in its ninth year, provides a unique forum to gather representatives from the North American cooperative groups as well as international groups such as the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) and the Japan Clinical Oncology Group (JCOG). This article, the fourth in a series that outlines the scientific vision of each group, will focus on clinical research in SCLC.

To provide a foundation for discussion, one must first consider current treatment perspectives in SCLC. The standard therapeutic approach for patients with limited-stage SCLC (LS-SCLC) who are not candidates for a clinical protocol is 4 cycles of chemotherapy with concurrent thoracic irradiation. Based on its preclinical synergy and superiority in efficacy and tolerability with concomitant irradiation, cisplatin and etoposide chemotherapy has supplanted alkylator/anthracycline-based regimens as the chemotherapy backbone.⁴ Thoracic irradiation results in local control and a survival benefit; however, the timing of radiation appears critical.^{5,6} For example, early concurrent chemoradiation yields a small, but significant, survival advantage when compared with late concurrent or sequential thoracic irradiation; yet, the optimal radiation dose and fractionation regimen remains controversial.^{7,8} For patients with excellent performance status and an adequate baseline pulmonary reserve, administration of twice-daily thoracic irradiation to 45 Gy with cisplatin/etoposide has shown encouraging long-term survival results.⁹ However, in practice, this schedule is logistically difficult to administer and yet unknown to be superior to a biologically equivalent dose of a once-daily thoracic irradiation regimen. Patients with LS-SCLC who attain a complete response (CR) after concurrent chemoradiation are offered prophylactic cranial irradiation (PCI) based on a meta-analysis reporting a 5.4% improvement in 3-year overall survival (OS; 20.7% PCI-treated vs. 15.3% control) and a 25% reduction in the incidence of brain metastases (33.1% PCI-treated vs. 58.6% control).¹⁰

In North America and Europe, the cornerstone of treatment for extensive-stage SCLC (ES-SCLC) consists of platinum (cisplatin or carboplatin) and etoposide chemotherapy. The primary role of radiation therapy is for palliating symptomatic sites of disease. Recently, PCI has been incorporated into the treatment algorithm on the basis of results from a phase III clinical trial randomizing 286 patients with ES-SCLC with any response to initial chemotherapy to either PCI or observation.¹¹ At 1 year, PCI significantly reduced the incidence of symptomatic brain metastases (14.4% PCI-treated vs. 40.4% control; hazard ratio [HR], 0.27; $P < .001$) and increased OS (27.1% PCI-treated vs. 13.3% control; [HR], 0.68; $P = .003$). Indeed, this has led to the recommendation that PCI be offered for patients with ES-SCLC who respond to first-line chemotherapy, after a thorough discussion of the potential risks and benefits.

Unfortunately, the disease recurs in the majority of patients shortly after initial treatment. Although second-line chemotherapy can result in tumor regression, responses are short-lived, and median survival is often < 6 months.² A key factor guiding the selection of future therapy, and its possible efficacy, is the type of response gained after exposure to a first-line platinum-based regimen. Historically, patients are classified into 1 of 3 groups of relapsed dis-

ease: platinum sensitive, platinum resistant, or refractory. Platinum sensitivity is arbitrarily defined as a chemotherapy-free interval > 90 days, whereas patients with platinum-resistant disease have recurrent disease within 90 days of completing chemotherapy.² Refractory SCLC refers to those who do not respond to, or progress during, first-line chemotherapy. Patients with platinum-resistant and refractory disease are often grouped together and generally have poor responses to subsequent chemotherapy ($\leq 10\%$) and shorter median survivals than patients with platinum-sensitive disease. Although there is no standard second-line treatment option, a number of agents have shown single-agent activity, such as the camptothecin analogues (topotecan, irinotecan), paclitaxel, vinorelbine, and gemcitabine.² Multiple-agent regimens, such as retreatment with platinum/etoposide, are also a common treatment choice for platinum-sensitive tumors. In the late 1990s, a randomized phase III trial for patients with recurrent SCLC compared single-agent topotecan with cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, and vincristine (CAV) and found topotecan to be equally efficacious but with greater palliative effects on common lung cancer symptoms.¹² Topotecan, as a result of its US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for second-line SCLC therapy in platinum-sensitive relapsed disease, has emerged as the standard of comparison in most phase III clinical trials.¹³

These perspectives highlight the current state of SCLC management, which has not changed significantly in the past decade. We will now explore the scientific progress and research endeavors pursued by the large multi-institutional cooperative groups.

Cancer and Leukemia Group B

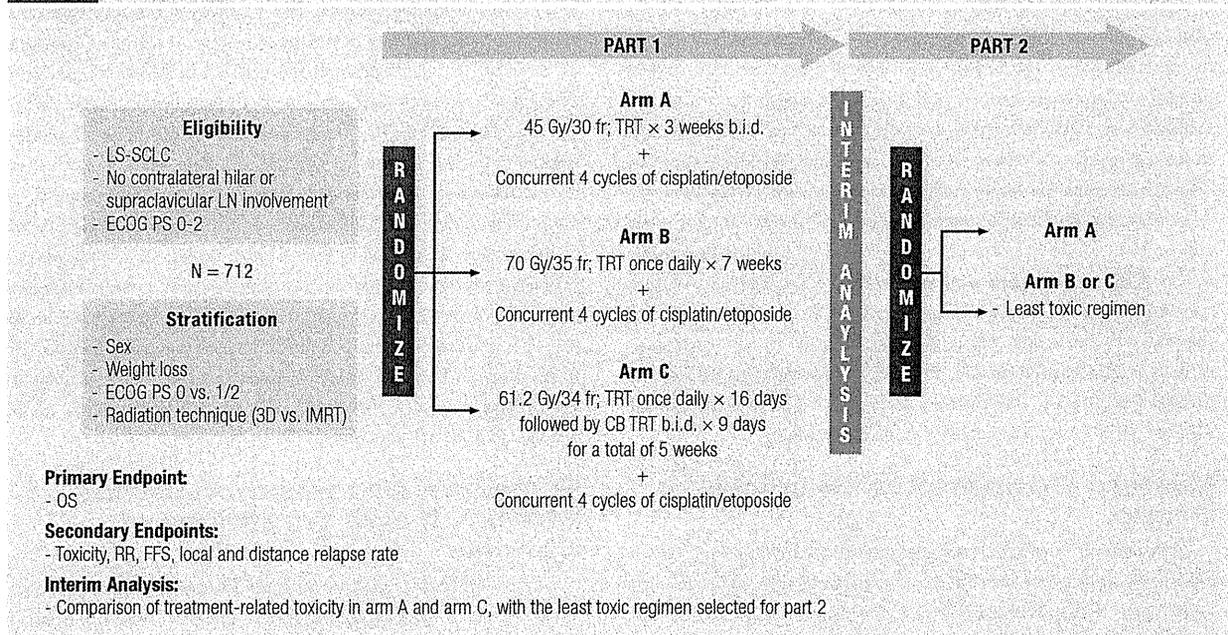
In 1987, the CALGB published a seminal report (CALGB 8083) describing the benefits of thoracic irradiation when given concurrently with chemotherapy for patients with LS-SCLC.¹⁴ Improvements in local control, failure-free survival, and OS strengthened the case for shifting the standard of care to a chemoradiation therapy approach. Unfortunately, in 2009, many questions still remain unanswered regarding the optimal dose and delivery of thoracic irradiation.

Cancer and Leukemia Group B has been instrumental in exploring the 70-Gy maximum-tolerated dose (MTD) of once-daily radiation therapy in a phase II setting.^{13,15} For example, CALGB conducted CALGB 39808, in which 57 patients with LS-SCLC were treated with 70 Gy in 35 once-daily fractions concurrently with carboplatin/etoposide following 2 cycles of induction paclitaxel and topotecan.¹⁶ The reported 2-year survival was 48%, and the incidence of grade 3 dysphagia was 16%. However, the experience with 70 Gy of concurrent thoracic chemoradiation remains limited and, as a consequence, the de facto practice still calls for once-daily radiation therapy to be delivered at a total dose of 50-60 Gy in 1.8-2.0-Gy fractions.

Hyperfractionating radiation therapy is believed to offer additional clinical benefits. An Intergroup 0096 phase II trial randomized 417 patients to receive 4 cycles of cisplatin/etoposide with either 45 Gy of concurrent thoracic irradiation given twice daily over 3 weeks or once-daily for 5 weeks. Thoracic irradiation was scheduled to coincide with the start of chemotherapy. This pivotal trial found a significant 5-year OS benefit favoring twice-daily

Cooperative Group Research Endeavors: SCLC

Figure 1 CALGB 30610/RTOG 0538 Treatment Schema: Phase III Trial Comparing Thoracic Radiation Therapy Regimens in Limited-Stage Small-Cell Lung Cancer



Abbreviations: 3D = 3-dimensional conformal radiation therapy; b.i.d. = twice daily; CALGB = Cancer and Leukemia Group B; CB = concomitant boost; ECOG = Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group; FFS = failure-free survival; fr = fractions; IMRT = intensity-modulated radiation therapy; LN = lymph node; LS-SCLC = limited-stage small-cell lung cancer; OS = overall survival; PS = performance status; RR = response rate; RTOG = Radiation Therapy Oncology Group; TRT = thoracic radiation therapy

thoracic irradiation compared with once-daily fractionation (26% vs. 16%; $P = .04$) and a lower incidence of local failure (36% vs. 52%; $P = .06$).⁹ Grade 3 esophagitis was the most significant toxicity with twice-daily radiation therapy (26% twice-daily vs. 11% once-daily), but the incidence of grade 4 esophagitis did not differ between regimens.

Radiation Therapy Oncology Group has examined an alternative fractionation scheme using a concomitant boost technique to escalate dose while keeping the total treatment duration at 5 weeks. Initially, thoracic irradiation is administered once-daily for 3 weeks, followed by 2 weeks of twice-daily thoracic irradiation. This dose/fractionation regimen is hypothesized to counteract accelerated repopulation, the increased tumor cell growth rate that is known to often occur several weeks into treatment. The MTD for the concomitant-boost technique, when combined with cisplatin/etoposide chemotherapy, has been determined at 61.2 Gy.¹⁷ Thus, there are 3 plausible treatment regimens for delivering concurrent thoracic radiation therapy in LS-SCLC at relatively similar biologically effective doses: (1) CALGB's 70-Gy once-daily fractionation for 7 weeks, (2) the Intergroup 0096 regimen of 45-Gy twice-daily fractionation for 3 weeks, and (3) RTOG's 61.2-Gy concomitant-boost technique for 5 weeks duration.

To address the important radiation therapy questions of optimal dose and fractionation schemes, CALGB 30610, an Intergroup study, has now been developed (Figure 1). This pivotal phase III trial for patients with treatment-naïve LS-SCLC is the first of its kind in well over a decade. It consists of 2 parts; part 1 has 3 treatment arms with patients randomized in a 1:2:2 fashion: arm A, 45

Gy (1.5 Gy twice daily × 3 weeks); arm B, 70 Gy (2.0 Gy once daily × 7 weeks); arm C, 61.2 Gy (1.8 Gy once daily × 16 days followed by 1.8 Gy twice daily × 9 days for a total duration of 5 weeks). Four cycles of cisplatin and etoposide are given concurrently, starting on day 1 of radiation therapy for all arms of this study. After interim analysis for toxicity assessment, only 1 experimental arm (arm B or arm C) will be selected for further accrual in part 2 of the study. The primary endpoint will be OS, and the projected total accrual is approximately 712 patients.

Several randomized trials have attempted to build on the platform of platinum/etoposide chemotherapy for ES-SCLC; however, these attempts have been met with disappointing results. For example, the addition of topotecan consolidation, paclitaxel, BEC2 vaccination, or thalidomide to the platinum/etoposide backbone have not shown any significant survival advantage.¹⁸⁻²² Furthermore, CALGB 30103, a randomized phase II trial, evaluated the Bcl-2 antisense oligonucleotide, oblimersen (G3139), in combination with carboplatin/etoposide in 56 chemotherapy-naïve patients with ES-SCLC. Although Bcl-2 is an overexpressed apoptotic inhibitor implicated in SCLC oncogenesis and chemotherapy resistance, CALGB 30103 suggested poorer clinical outcomes for patients who received oblimersen than for those who did not (1-year OS rates, 24% and 47%).²³

Sunitinib, an oral small-molecule, multitargeted receptor tyrosine kinase inhibitor, has been FDA approved for the treatment of patients with renal cell carcinoma and imatinib-resistant gastrointestinal stromal tumors. It has potent inhibitory effects of the platelet-derived growth factor receptors (PDGFRs)- α and

- β , vascular endothelial growth factor receptors (VEGFRs)-1, -2, and -3, stem cell factor receptor (KIT), Fms-like tyrosine kinase-3 (FLT-3), colony stimulating factor receptor (CSF)-1R, and the glial cell line–derived neurotrophic factor receptor (RET). Given its promiscuity in inhibition, sunitinib is hypothesized to affect multiple hallmarks of cancer, including angiogenesis and tumor cell proliferation. CALGB 30504 is an ongoing phase I/II clinical trial investigating the combination of sunitinib plus cisplatin/etoposide for patients with ES-SCLC. The phase I portion of the trial will determine the MTD to be used for the phase II portion. Sunitinib will be given daily concurrent with 6 cycles of cisplatin/etoposide, followed by maintenance sunitinib until the development of progressive disease (PD) or excessive toxicity. The phase II portion of the trial will randomize patients, after initial treatment with sunitinib plus cisplatin/etoposide, to maintenance therapy with either sunitinib or placebo. The primary endpoint will be progression-free survival (PFS), with an accrual goal of 107 patients.

Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group

Bevacizumab, a monoclonal antibody (MoAb) targeting VEGF, has shown to improve survival when combined with chemotherapy in patients with advanced NSCLC, as described in the ECOG 4599 trial.²⁴ Given these positive results, further evaluation of bevacizumab was felt to be warranted in SCLC because of its high degree of vascularization and VEGF expression.²⁵ ECOG 3501, a phase II trial of bevacizumab with cisplatin/etoposide in ES-SCLC, has completed accrual. A 21-day cycle of intravenous (I.V.) cisplatin 60 mg/m² day 1, etoposide 120 mg/m² days 1-3 I.V., and bevacizumab 15 mg/m² day 1 was administered for 4 cycles with maintenance bevacizumab given thereafter until PD or unacceptable toxicity. The primary endpoint was to detect an improvement in 6-month PFS from 16% to 33% in 66 patients. Updated survival analysis reported at the 2008 ILCC showed a 6-month PFS of 35% and a 1-year OS rate of 37%.²⁶ Median PFS and OS were 4.7 months and 11.1 months, respectively. Of the evaluable patients, there were no grade 3/4 hemorrhagic events, despite the known predisposition for SCLC to be centrally located. In another nonrandomized phase II study, CALGB 3036, 72 patients with previously untreated ES-SCLC received a maximum of 6 cycles of cisplatin 30 mg/m² days 1 and 8 I.V., irinotecan 65 mg/m² days 1 and 8 I.V., and bevacizumab 15 mg/m² day 1 without maintenance therapy. The regimen was feasible, and the 1-year PFS and OS rates were 18.3% and 48.9% (median PFS, 7.1 months; median OS, 11.7 months), respectively.²⁷ VEGF and PDGF levels showed no correlation with response, PFS, or OS. Overall, these studies are forming the rationale for the industry to evaluate bevacizumab in the phase III setting.

The Hedgehog (Hh) pathway is an essential embryonic signaling cascade implicated as an oncogenic catalyst in a variety of malignancies. There is evidence supporting persistent activation of the Hh pathway in SCLC, and in cell lines treated with a potent Hh inhibitor, cyclopamine, significant growth inhibition has been observed.^{28,29} GDC-0449 is an orally bioavailable synthetic inhibitor of Hh signal transduction and has shown safety and clinical benefit in a phase I clinical trial for patients with advanced solid

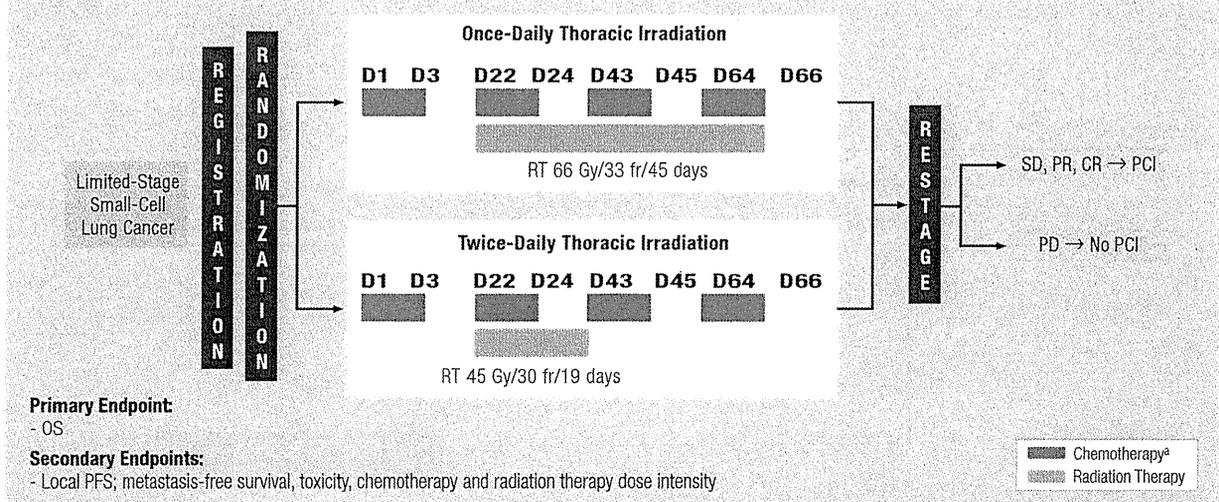
tumors.³⁰ Similarly, inhibition of the insulin-like growth factor (IGF) pathway is a promising new target with therapeutic efficacy in a variety of tumor models. This pathway is thought to mediate chemotherapy resistance as well as resistance to certain novel agents in SCLC.^{31,32} Cixutumumab (IMC-A12), a MoAb targeting the IGF type 1 receptor (IGF-1R), is in clinical development. ECOG is proposing an ECOG 1508 three-armed, randomized phase II trial to determine “proof of activity.” Patients with ES-SCLC will be randomized to receive (1) cisplatin/etoposide alone, (2) cisplatin/etoposide plus GDC-0449, or (3) cisplatin/etoposide plus cixutumumab for a total of four 21-day cycles. PFS is the planned primary endpoint, and the statistical design will include 74 patients per arm to have 85% power to detect a 33% reduction in the HR for PFS, corresponding to a 50% improvement in median PFS from 5.0 months to 7.5 months. Extensive correlative analysis will be integrated within this trial, with particular emphasis on Hh ligand and IGF-1R expression.

European Organization for the Research and Treatment of Cancer

The EORTC extends over multiple European countries and is a key contributor to clinical lung cancer research. Building upon the Intergroup 0096 study in LS-SCLC, the CONVERT (Concurrent ONce-daily VErsus Radiotherapy Twice-daily) trial hypothesizes that increasing the total dose of once-daily thoracic irradiation will improve efficacy and negate the benefit of twice-daily fractionation, thus making the once-daily regimen more practical and logistically easier to deliver. The CONVERT trial is a 2-arm, multicenter, randomized phase III Intergroup trial comparing a once-daily with a twice-daily schedule, given concurrently with cisplatin and etoposide (Figure 2). The radiation therapy regimen put forth by the Intergroup 0096 trial (45 Gy, twice-daily fractionation over 3 weeks) will be compared with 66 Gy, once-daily fractionation over 6.5 weeks. Unlike in the CALGB 30610 trial, thoracic irradiation will commence with the second cycle of chemotherapy. The primary endpoint will be OS, and the goal for accrual is 532 patients within a 4-year time span. The study is currently open in a number of EORTC member institutions.

Amrubicin is a novel cytotoxic agent being evaluated for the treatment of patients with ES-SCLC. It is a completely synthetic 9-amino-anthracycline that is converted to its ¹³C alcohol metabolite amrubicinol, which has greater antitumor activity than its parent molecule, in stark contrast to the traditional anthracycline derivatives, doxorubicinol and daunorubicinol.³¹ Moreover, amrubicin has been found to be less cardiotoxic than doxorubicin in animal models.³³ In a study of patients with refractory and sensitive relapsed SCLC, amrubicin has shown activity as a single agent. The overall response rate (ORR) was approximately 50% in each group, and the median PFS, median OS, and 1-year survival times in the refractory and sensitive groups were 2.6 months and 4.4 months, 10.3 months and 11.6 months, and 40% and 46%, respectively.³⁴ EORTC 08062 is a phase II trial equally randomizing chemotherapy-naïve patients with ES-SCLC to 1 of 3 treatment arms: arm 1, amrubicin 45 mg/m² on days 1-3; arm 2, amrubicin 40 mg/m² on days 1-3 plus cisplatin 60 mg/m² on day 1; and arm 3, cisplatin 75

Figure 2 Treatment Schema: Phase III CONVERT Trial



^aMaximum of 6 cycles of cisplatin/etoposide.

Abbreviations: CONVERT = Concurrent ONce-daily VErsus Radiotherapy Twice-daily; CR = complete response; D = day; fr = fractions; OS = overall survival; PCI = prophylactic cranial irradiation; PD = progressive disease; PFS = progression-free survival; PR = partial response; RT = radiation therapy; SD = stable disease

Table 1 Japan Clinical Oncology Group Research Portfolio of Ongoing and Proposed Clinical Trials in Small-Cell Lung Cancer

Protocol Number	Phase	Population	Reference Arm	Experimental Arm	Accrual Target, N	Primary Endpoint
JCOG 0202	III	Treatment-naïve LS-SCLC	Cisplatin/etoposide + RT → Cisplatin/etoposide	Cisplatin/etoposide + RT → Cisplatin/irinotecan	250	Overall survival
JCOG 0509	III	Treatment-naïve ES-SCLC	Cisplatin/irinotecan	Cisplatin/amrubicin	282	Overall survival
JCOG 0605	III	Relapsed SCLC: sensitive	Nogitecan	Cisplatin/etoposide/irinotecan	180	Overall survival
^a PC 705	II	Relapsed SCLC: refractory	–	Amrubicin	80	Response rate

^aProposed clinical trial in development.

Abbreviations: ES-SCLC = extensive-stage small-cell lung cancer; JCOG = Japan Clinical Oncology Group; LS-SCLC = limited-stage small-cell lung cancer; PC = protocol concept; RT = radiation therapy; SCLC = small-cell lung cancer

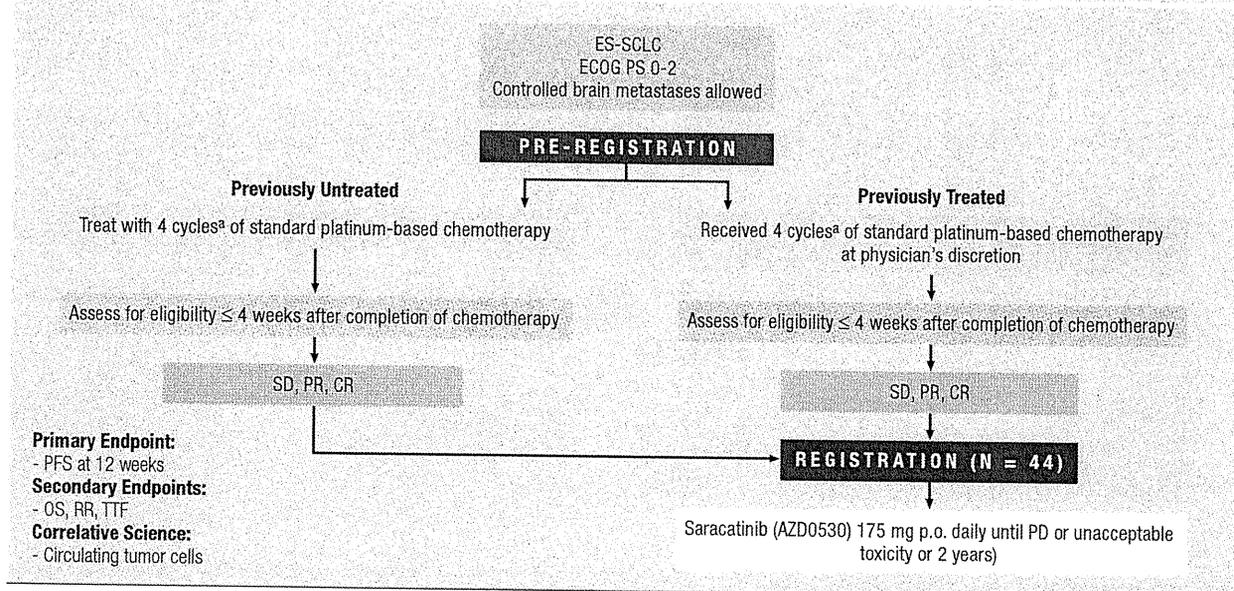
mg/m² on day 1 plus etoposide 100 mg/m² I.V. on day 1 followed by oral etoposide 200 mg/m² on days 2 and 3. In all arms, treatment is repeated every 21 days in the absence of progressive disease or unacceptable toxicity. Patients are stratified based on institution, sex, and performance status. The primary endpoint is RR, with secondary endpoints examining PFS, OS, and toxicity. Amrubicin is already approved in Japan and is currently being investigated in the United States in a multinational, randomized phase III trial for patients with SCLC who do not respond to first-line therapy. Considerable hope exists for this agent, but its role will need to be more clearly defined.

Finally, a proposal is in place for a phase II EORTC 08061 trial treating patients with chemotherapy-naïve or sensitive relapsed ES-SCLC. Sunitinib will be given as a single oral agent (150-mg loading dose followed by 37.5 mg daily) until progressive disease. Disease control rate at 4 weeks after the start of treatment will be the primary endpoint.

Japan Clinical Oncology Group

Although there are a number of cooperative oncology groups in Japan, JCOG and the North Japan Lung Cancer Study Group

(NJLCSG) are particularly active in SCLC research efforts. JCOG draws from its 190 participating institutions to enroll patients into its trials. In SCLC, there are 3 ongoing phase III trials, in addition to 1 phase II protocol in development that is evaluating amrubicin in the relapsed/refractory setting (Table 1). However, the featured trial at the 2008 ILCC was NJLCSG 0402, a randomized phase II trial comparing amrubicin with topotecan in previously treated SCLC. Sixty patients, stratified according to performance status and type of relapse (chemotherapy sensitive or refractory), were randomly assigned to receive amrubicin 40 mg/m² days 1-3 or topotecan 1 mg/m² days 1-5 for a minimum of three 21-day cycles. The primary endpoint of ORR was 38% for the amrubicin arm and 21% in the topotecan arm.³⁵ In sensitive relapse, the ORRs for amrubicin and topotecan were 53% and 21%, and in refractory relapse, 17% and 0%, respectively. There were no significant advantages of either therapy in median PFS and OS. Neutropenia was severe for those treated with amrubicin, with 79% of the patients experiencing grade 4 neutropenia and 14% of the patients experiencing febrile neutropenia. Moreover, 1 treatment-related death was observed resulting from sepsis. Encouragingly, amrubicin has activity, particularly in chemotherapy-refractory relapse, which is

Figure 3 NCCTG 0621 Treatment Schema: Phase II Trial of Saracatinib (AZD0530) in Extensive-Stage Small-Cell Lung Cancer

^a1 cycle = 21 days.

Abbreviations: CR = complete response; ECOG = Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group; ES-SCLC = extensive-stage small-cell lung cancer; NCCTG = North Central Cancer Treatment Group; OS = overall survival; PD = progressive disease; PFS = progression-free survival; p.o. = orally; PS = performance status; RR = response rate; SD = stable disease; TTF = time to treatment failure

notoriously difficult to treat. Results are limited by the small sample size but still warrant further evaluation in larger-scale trials.

North Central Cancer Treatment Group

The NCCTG is a regional cooperative network based in the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota with a number of centers scattered across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The NCCTG customarily focuses on phase II clinical trial designs with novel therapeutic agents and also participates in Intergroup protocols such as the ongoing CALGB 30610 trial described earlier. The NCCTG research portfolio recently featured a phase II NCCTG 0621 trial evaluating a novel oral c-SRC inhibitor, saracatinib (AZD0530), administered daily in nonprogressing patients with ES-SCLC who received a maximum of 4 cycles of standard platinum-based chemotherapy (Figure 3). The trial was designed for a primary endpoint of 12-week PFS, and secondary endpoints included RR, OS, and time to treatment failure. Incorporated within the study is an intriguing analysis of the effects of saracatinib treatment on the levels of circulating tumor cells (CTCs) as well as correlative science attempting to determine potential predictive markers of response in CTCs. Complete analysis of the results are eagerly anticipated.

National Cancer Institute of Canada Clinical Trials Group

The NCIC-CTG is the only adult cooperative oncology group based in Canada with a national membership supporting a spectrum of clinical trials ranging from phase I testing of novel therapeutic agents to the conduct of large, randomized, controlled phase III trials. The importance of its contributions to the treatment of lung cancer is well recognized. Historically, the NCIC-CTG has

been an active participant of SCLC trials initiated by other cooperative groups. NCIC-CTG BR.28, also known as the previously described CONVERT trial, is one such effort that has recently opened to accrual in NCIC-CTG member institutions.

Radiation Therapy Oncology Group

In lung cancer, RTOG research endeavors are intended to decipher the optimal methods of using radiation therapy in a consistently effective and safe manner. Besides being a key collaborator in the CALGB 30610 trial, designated as RTOG 0538 within the group, RTOG has been instrumental in discerning the best method of delivering PCI in LS-SCLC. RTOG 0212, closed to accrual in February 2008, was designed to determine the optimal dose of PCI after a meta-analysis suggested a reduced incidence of brain metastases with higher PCI doses. Patients with LS-SCLC who were complete responders to primary treatment were randomized to receive standard (25-Gy/10-fraction/12 days) or higher PCI doses (36-Gy) administered using either conventional (18 fractions/24 days) or accelerated hyperfractionated radiation therapy (24 twice-daily fractions/16 days). This phase II/III trial had significant contributions from CALGB, ECOG, EORTC, and SWOG, with results presented at the 2008 American Society of Clinical Oncology meeting. A total of 720 patients were enrolled, and although there was a nonsignificant trend for reduced 2-year brain metastases incidence with high-dose PCI compared with standard-dose PCI (24% vs. 30%; $P = .13$), there was a significantly marked increase in chest relapse (48% vs. 40%; $P = .02$) and mortality (2-year OS 37% with high-dose PCI vs. 42% with standard-dose PCI; $P = .03$).³⁶ Thus, the prevailing PCI dose of 25 Gy remains the standard of care for LS-SCLC.

Cooperative Group Research Endeavors: SCLC

Intergroup 0096 showed a survival benefit using an accelerated fractionation schedule compared with daily radiation therapy. RTOG 0239, a phase II trial, evaluated an innovative radiation therapy design where once-daily radiation therapy along with concurrent chemotherapy was given followed by a hyperfractionated schedule, a concomitant boost, in LS-SCLC (61.2 Gy/34 fractions). This schedule was found to be tolerable but was associated with a high incidence of myelosuppression.³⁷ RTOG 0623 is a phase II trial designed to overcome this adverse event by incorporating filgrastim with concurrent chemoradiation therapy and pegfilgrastim, with adjuvant cisplatin/etoposide chemotherapy in patients with LS-SCLC. Historically, hematopoietic growth factors have not been recommended during combined modality chemoradiation therapy based on early theoretical concerns that growth factors might release progenitor cells and expose them to the damaging effects of radiation therapy, but significant improvements in supportive care and delivery of radiation therapy could make these concerns less applicable. The primary endpoint of RTOG 0623 is to evaluate the safety and efficacy of filgrastim in reducing grade ≥ 3 neutropenia when given with concurrent chemoradiation. Unfortunately, this trial is accruing poorly and is expected to close soon.

Southwest Oncology Group

The premier effort of the SWOG research portfolio in SCLC is the recently reported S0124 phase III trial, a study in which CALGB, ECOG, and NCCTG also participated as part of the Intergroup.³⁸ This protocol duplicated the treatment regimen of a small phase III study conducted by JCOG (JCOG 9511) demonstrating the superiority of the cisplatin/irinotecan combination over cisplatin/etoposide in patients with chemotherapy-naïve ES-SCLC with respect to RR, PFS, and OS.³⁹ After an interim analysis, the trial was closed to further accrual, with only 154 patients entered. Because of its small sample size and possible effects from pharmacogenomic differences between Japanese and North American populations, further confirmatory studies were prompted.

In a comparative North American and Australian phase III trial directed by the Hoosier Oncology Group, 331 patients were randomized to receive a modified dose schedule of cisplatin/irinotecan or cisplatin/etoposide.⁴⁰ The modified treatment regimens were intended to improve delivery, reduce toxicity, and be more consistent with the dosages and schedules administered in the United States.³¹ In this trial, there were no differences in outcome between cisplatin/irinotecan and cisplatin/etoposide. Because of the differing dose schedules, questions remained regarding the validity of cisplatin/irinotecan as an optimal regimen for ES-SCLC.

The Southwest Oncology Group sought to conduct a confirmatory, appropriately powered trial (S0124) by designing a similar study to JCOG 9511 by using identical cisplatin/irinotecan and cisplatin/etoposide treatment doses and schedules, thereby determining whether the results were reproducible and relevant to a Western population.³⁸ Correlative studies were incorporated to seek out the possible role of population-related pharmacogenomic variability in irinotecan metabolism due to genetic polymorphisms. Over a 4-year time span, 671 patients were randomized to receive a maximum of 4 cycles of either cisplatin 60 mg/m² on day 1 plus irinotecan 60 mg/m² on days 1, 8, and 15 every 28-days or cisplatin

30 mg/m² on day 1 plus etoposide 100 mg/m² on days 1-3 every 21-days. Patients were stratified based on performance status, number of metastatic sites, weight loss, and lactate dehydrogenase levels. The primary endpoint was OS. Cisplatin/irinotecan efficacy outcomes were similar to cisplatin/etoposide, with an ORR of 60% versus 57%, median PFS of 5.8 months versus 5.2 months ($P = .07$), and a median OS of 9.9 months versus 9.1 months ($P = .71$), respectively.³⁸

Evaluation of the adverse events between the S0124 and JCOG9511 trials demonstrated a significantly higher hematologic toxicity in Japanese patients compared with North American patients with either treatment regimen ($P \leq .02$), but the incidence of nonhematologic toxicities did not differ significantly. Of those enrolled in the S0124 trial, 142 patient samples were analyzed for pharmacogenetic variability of select genes in irinotecan metabolism performed on genomic DNA from peripheral blood mononuclear cells. Intriguingly, significant correlations for genetic polymorphisms and hematologic and gastrointestinal toxicities were found.³⁸

Thus, S0124 did not confirm the results of JCOG9511 in a Western population. The putative mechanisms underlying the differences in efficacy and toxicity are hypothesized to be related to allelic variants of genes involved in irinotecan metabolism. SWOG has confirmed that in North America, platinum/etoposide remains the standard of care for previously untreated ES-SCLC.

The Southwest Oncology Group also recently reported S0435, a phase II study investigating the role of sorafenib in ES-SCLC.⁴¹ Sorafenib, an oral multikinase inhibitor with effects on tumor proliferation and angiogenesis, is FDA-approved for the treatment of advanced renal cell and hepatocellular carcinoma. Patients with ES-SCLC treated with only 1 previous platinum-based chemotherapy regimen were stratified according to platinum sensitivity and treated with sorafenib 400 mg orally twice daily on a continuous basis for a 28-day cycle. Of 80 evaluable patients, 3 patients with platinum-sensitive disease had a partial response (PR; 8%), whereas only 1 patient with platinum-resistant disease had a PR (2%). The stable-disease rates were similar between both groups (32% and 31%, respectively). Median PFS was 2 months for both strata, and OS was 7 months for platinum-sensitive patients and 5 months for platinum-resistant patients. Given these results and the general tolerability of sorafenib, further study of this agent in SCLC is warranted.

Conclusion

Through their capacity to offer a wide range of scientific and patient resources, multi-institutional cooperative groups have a vital responsibility to ensure that significant strides in SCLC research continue to be made. As many SCLC trials have traditionally been underpowered, the importance of large collaborative research efforts to maximize accrual cannot be overemphasized. In addition, the trend to incorporate translational science studies into each trial offers an avenue to discern the underlying mechanisms of SCLC chemotherapy resistance and to perhaps develop future prognostic and predictive biomarker profiles. However, considerable work remains in order to overcome 2 decades of stagnant gains in SCLC management. The focus has shifted to first optimizing the delivery

of known effective treatments, such as thoracic irradiation in LS-SCLC, before expanding upon the paradigm so that therapeutic advances are built on a solid foundation. Moreover, novel targeted agents will certainly be added to the SCLC treatment armamentarium, ideally based on strong preclinical rationale and an appropriate "druggable" target, but to date, no targeted therapy has been approved for patients with SCLC. Indeed, the ongoing and planned research endeavors of the cooperative group system are essential to ensure that the future progress for SCLC management remains encouraging.

Disclosures

Dr. Gandara has served on the Board of Directors or held other leadership positions with Response Genetics, Inc.; has received research funding from Abbott Laboratories, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, and Eli Lilly and Company; has served as a paid consultant or been on an Advisory Board for AstraZeneca, Bayer Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Genentech, Inc., Pfizer Inc., Response Genetics, Inc., and sanofi-aventis U.S.; and is a member of the Speaker's Bureau for Eli Lilly and Company.

Dr. Saijo has held stock or equity ownership in Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Baas has served as a paid consultant or been on an Advisory Board for Hospira; Merck & Co., Inc.; Pfizer Inc.

Dr. Vokes has received research funding from Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Pfizer Inc., and Roche Pharmaceuticals; has served as a paid consultant or been on an Advisory Board for Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Genentech, Inc., ImClone Systems Incorporated, and OSI Pharmaceuticals; and is a member of the Speaker's Bureau for Genentech, Inc.

Dr. Schiller has received research funding from Celgene Corporation.

Dr. Goss has received research funding from AstraZeneca and Roche Pharmaceuticals and has served as a paid consultant or been on an Advisory Board for Amgen, AstraZeneca, Pfizer Inc., and Roche Pharmaceuticals.

All other authors have no relevant relationships to disclose.

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Cancer Therapy: Preclinical**Antitumor Activity of NK012 Combined with Cisplatin against Small Cell Lung Cancer and Intestinal Mucosal Changes in Tumor-Bearing Mouse after Treatment**Tatsuya Nagano,^{1,2,3} Masahiro Yasunaga,¹ Koichi Goto,² Hirotsugu Kenmotsu,² Yoshikatsu Koga,¹ Jun-ichiro Kuroda,¹ Yoshihiro Nishimura,³ Takashi Sugino,⁴ Yutaka Nishiwaki,² and Yasuhiro Matsumura¹

Abstract Purpose: To investigate the advantages of treatment with the SN-38–incorporating polymeric micelles NK012 over CPT-11 in combination with cisplatin [*cis*-dichlorodiammineplatinum (II) (CDDP)] in mice bearing a small cell lung cancer xenograft in terms of antitumor activity and toxicity, particularly intestinal toxicity.

Experimental Design: Cytotoxic effects were evaluated in human small cell lung cancer cell lines [H69, H82, and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)–secreting cells (SBC-3/VEGF and its mock transfectant SBC-3/Neo)]. *In vivo* antitumor effects were evaluated in SBC-3/Neo–bearing and SBC-3/VEGF–bearing mice after NK012/CDDP or CPT-11/CDDP administration on days 0, 7, and 14. Drug distribution was analyzed by high-performance liquid chromatography or fluorescence microscopy, and the small intestine was pathologically examined.

Results: The *in vitro* growth-inhibitory effects of NK012 were 198- to 532-fold more potent than those of CPT-11. A significant difference in the relative tumor volume on day 30 was found between NK012/CDDP and CPT-11/CDDP treatments ($P = 0.0058$). Inflammatory changes in the small intestinal mucosa were rare in all NK012-treated mice but were commonly observed in CPT-11–treated mice. Moreover, a large amount of CPT-11 was excreted into the feces and high CPT-11 concentration was detected in the small intestinal epithelium. On the other hand, a small amount of NK012 was found in the feces and NK012 was weakly and uniformly distributed in the mucosal interstitium.

Conclusions: NK012/CDDP combination may be a promising candidate regimen against lung cancer without severe diarrhea toxicity and therefore warrants further clinical evaluation.

SN-38 or 7-ethyl-10-hydroxy-camptothecin is a biologically active metabolite of irinotecan hydrochloride (CPT-11) and is formed through CPT-11 conversion by carboxylesterases. SN-38 is active against various human cancers, such as colorectal, lung, and ovarian cancer (1–4). Although SN-38 shows up to 1,000-fold more potent cytotoxic activity against various cancer

cell lines than CPT-11 *in vitro* (5), it has been clinically unavailable because of its water-insoluble nature, and the conversion rate from CPT-11 to SN-38 is <10% of the original CPT-11 volume in the body (6, 7).

The SN-38–incorporating polymeric micelles NK012 seem to have the advantage of passive targeting of the drug delivery system. In this passive targeting of drug delivery system, the drug accumulates in tumor tissue by using the enhanced permeability and retention effect (8–11). This enhanced permeability and retention effect is based on several pathologic mechanisms, which include hypervascularity, secretion of tumor vascular permeability factors stimulating extravasation of macromolecules including nanoparticles such as liposomes and micelles, and the absence of an effective lymphatic drainage of macromolecules accumulated in solid tumor tissue. Recent studies showed that NK012 has a significantly more potent antitumor activity than CPT-11 against small cell lung cancer (SCLC; ref. 12), colorectal cancer (13), renal cancer (14), pancreatic cancer (15), stomach cancer (16), and glioma (17).

It was previously reported that the SN-38/*cis*-dichlorodiammineplatinum (II) (CDDP) combination showed synergistic effects (18). The median survival of SCLC patients treated with the CPT-11/cisplatin (CDDP) combination was significantly longer than that of SCLC patients treated with the etoposide/CDDP combination in a randomized phase III study ($P = 0.002$) conducted by the Japanese Cooperative Oncology

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Received 12/25/08; revised 3/3/09; accepted 3/9/09; published OnlineFirst 6/9/09.

Grant support: Grant-in-Aid from the Third Term Comprehensive Control Research for Cancer; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare grant H19-025 (K. Goto, Y. Nishiwaki, and Y. Matsumura); Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Scientific Research on Priority Areas grant 17016087 (Y. Matsumura); and Japanese Foundation for Multidisciplinary Treatment of Cancer (Y. Matsumura), and the Princess Takamatsu Cancer Research Fund (07-23908).

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doi:10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-08-3334

Translational Relevance

The SN-38–incorporating polymeric micelles NK012 has been shown to have significant antitumor activity against several cancer mouse models compared with CPT-11. The phase I study showed that patients treated with NK012 did not develop grade 3/4 diarrhea, one of the major adverse effects of CPT-11. Here, the antitumor activity of NK012/cisplatin combination was compared with that of CPT-11/cisplatin combination, one of the most active regimens against SCLC and NSCLC in the clinic. We also evaluated the pharmacologic and toxic profiles of the drug combinations, particularly in terms of diarrhea. NK012/cisplatin showed a significant potent antitumor activity against an SBC-3 xenograft compared with CPT-11/cisplatin. Moreover, inflammatory pathologic changes were rarely observed in the small intestinal mucosa of the NK012-treated mouse but were commonly observed in the CPT-11-treated mouse. NK012/cisplatin combination chemotherapy is thus a promising regimen against lung cancer without severe diarrhea toxicity and therefore warrants further clinical evaluation.

Group (19). Therefore, CPT-11/CDDP is considered to be one of the most active regimens against SCLC in Japan. A recent randomized phase III study showed that CPT-11/CDDP was equal to other platinum-based regimens, such as carboplatin plus paclitaxel, CDDP plus gemcitabine, and CDDP plus vinorelbine, in terms of response rate and overall survival in non-SCLC (NSCLC) patients (20).

One of the major clinically important toxic effects or dose-limiting factors of CPT-11 is severe late-onset diarrhea (21–23). We previously showed that there was no significant difference in the kinetic character of free SN-38 in the small intestine of mice bearing the SCLC cell line SBC-3 and treated with NK012 and CPT-11 (12). Furthermore, in two independent phase I clinical trials in Japan (24) and the United States (25), nonhematologic toxicities were minimal and grade 3/4 diarrhea was absent.

In this context, we conducted this study to investigate the advantages of NK012/CDDP over CPT-11/CDDP in mice bearing a SCLC xenograft in terms of antitumor activity and toxic effects, particularly intestinal toxicity.

Materials and Methods

Drugs and cells. SN-38 and NK012 were prepared by Nippon Kayaku Co. Ltd. CPT-11 was purchased from Yakult Honsha Co. Ltd. CDDP was obtained from WC Heraeus GmbH & Co. KG.

Among the SCLC cell lines used, SBC-3 was kindly provided by Dr. I. Kimura (Okayama University, Okayama, Japan), and H69 and H82 were purchased from the American Type Culture Collection. SBC-3, H69, and H82 were maintained in RPMI 1640 supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (Cell Culture Technologies) and penicillin, streptomycin, and amphotericin B (100 units/mL, 100 µg/mL, and 25 µg/mL, respectively; Sigma) in a humidified atmosphere containing 5% CO₂ at 37°C. Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)–secreting cells, SBC-3/VEGF and its mock transfectant SBC-3/Neo, were generated

from SBC-3 cells transfected with BMG-Neo-VEGF and BMG-Neo, as described (26).

In vitro study. The growth-inhibitory effects of NK012, CPT-11, SN-38, and CDDP were examined by tetrazolium salt–based proliferation assay (WST-8 assay; Wako Chemicals). One hundred microliters of a suspension of exponentially growing cells (1×10^5 /mL of SBC-3/Neo and SBC-3/VEGF or 1×10^6 /mL of H69 and H82) were placed into the wells of a 96-well plate and incubated for 24 h at 37°C. Then, after medium removal, 100 µL of medium containing various concentrations of each drug were added to the wells and then incubated for 72 h at 37°C. After medium removal, 10 µL of WST-8 solution and 90 µL of medium were added to the wells followed by incubation for 1 h at 37°C. The growth-inhibitory effects of each drug were assessed spectrophotometrically (SpectraMax 190, Molecular Devices Corp.). The IC₅₀ value was determined on the dose-response curves. The nature of interaction between NK012 and CDDP against SCLC cell lines, SBC-3/Neo, SBC-3/VEGF, H69, and H82, was evaluated by median-effect plot analyses and the combination index method of Chou and Talalay (27).

Experimental mice model. Female BALB/c nude mice (6 wk old) were purchased from SLC Japan. Mice were inoculated s.c. in the flank with 1×10^7 cells/150 µL cell suspension of SBC-3/Neo and SBC-3/VEGF cell lines.

All animal procedures were done in compliance with the guidelines for the care and use of experimental animals established by the Committee for Animal Experimentation of the National Cancer Center; these guidelines meet the ethical standards required by law and also comply with the guidelines for the use of experimental animals in Japan.

In vivo growth inhibition assay. When the tumor volume (TV) reached 1,500 mm³, mice were randomly divided into test groups consisting of five mice per group (day 0). Drugs were i.v. administered into the tail vein on days 0, 7, and 14. NK012 was given at SN-38 equivalent doses of 10 and 5 mg/kg/d, which are one third and one sixth of the maximum tolerated dose, respectively. The reference drug, CPT-11, was given at 22 and 10 mg/kg/d, which are one third and one sixth of the maximum tolerated dose, respectively. CDDP was simultaneously given on the same day at 2.5 mg/kg/d based on a previous report (28). In preliminary experiment, NK012 (5 mg/kg) plus CDDP (2.5 mg/kg) seemed to be superior to NK012 (5 mg/kg) alone in these tumors. NaCl solution (0.9%) was administered i.v. as normal control. The length (*a*) and width (*b*) of the tumor masses and body weight (BW) were measured twice a week, and TV was calculated using $TV = (a \times b^2) / 2$. Relative TV (RTV) on day *n* was calculated using $RTV = TV_n / TV_0$, where *TV_n* is the TV on day *n* and *TV₀* is the TV on day 0. Relative BW (RBW) was calculated using $RBW = BW_n / BW_0$. Differences in RTV and RBW between the treatment groups on day 30 were analyzed using the unpaired *t* test.

Pharmacokinetic analysis by high-performance liquid chromatography. Female BALB/c nude mice (*n* = 3) bearing SBC-3/Neo and SBC-3/VEGF tumors (1,500 mm³) were used for drug pharmacokinetic analysis. NK012 or CPT-11 was administered at an equimolar dose of 20 or 30 mg/kg on day 0, respectively, as reported (12). CDDP was simultaneously given at 2.5 mg/kg. Mice were sacrificed 1, 6, 24, and 72 h (day 3) after administration. Plasma samples, tumors, upper small intestine, and feces were obtained and stored at -80°C until analysis.

SN-38 was extracted for each sample and reversed-phase high-performance liquid chromatography was done as reported (12).

Pathologic studies of small intestinal mucosa. CPT-11 and NK012 were injected to female BALB/c nude mice (*n* = 3) at the same dose schedules as those used in the treatment experiment. On day 14 after the last dosing, mice were sacrificed and parts of the small intestine were sampled at 5 cm from the pyloric part for the jejunum and 5 cm from the ileocecal junction for the ileum. Samples were fixed in 10% formalin, paraffin embedded, sectioned, and stained with H&E. Inflammation was scored by using an inflammation scale from - to ++, with - indicating absent inflammation, + showing mild