



Patient Power

MPN Updates From ASH 2018 With Dr. Casey O'Connell

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Lee Swanson:

Welcome to Patient Power. I'm Lee Swanson, and we're at the American Society of Hematology conference in San Diego. I have a chance tonight to talk to Dr. Casey O'Connell from USC. And you specialize in, let me make sure I'm going to get this right, myeloproliferative neoplasms, and break that down for me.

Dr. O'Connell:

Yes. Thanks for having me, Lee. Myeloproliferative neoplasms include essential thrombocytosis, polycythemia vera and myelofibrosis, and essentially they're diseases where the bone marrow makes too many cells until the myelofibrosis occurs where patients generally start to develop anemia to more advanced phase of the disease.

Lee Swanson:

And what's come out at the conference that interests you?

Dr. O'Connell:

Well, it's been a very exciting conference I think for myeloproliferative neoplasms. It really illustrates how much action there is in the scientific front, so we're all really excited. There have been some really great papers on the interferons. Our big international collaboration in which we compared hydroxyurea (Hydrea) to pegylated interferon alpha, A, in patients with newly diagnosed ET and PV we have two year results from that paper, but other groups have three and even longer results from clinical trials using pegylated interferons.

So there's a lot of promise, but it looks like some of the impact that we were really excited to see may not start to be obvious until year three or beyond.

Lee Swanson:

Okay. So what does a patient—what's the conversation a patient should be having with their doctor?

Dr. O'Connell:

Well, I think patients really with MPNs have some resources to stay educated and abreast of all the latest findings. We don't have any newly approved therapies just yet, but there's some really interesting and exciting preclinical work from Ross Levine, Angela Fleischman and others looking at how the disease develops and in particular how patients start to develop fibrosis and have more progressive disease. And in some of these preclinical models things like anti-inflammatory, anti-bromo—well, BRD4 inhibitors and others might combine with therapies like ruxolitinib (Jakafi) to help stem the progression of the diseases. So these are really exciting things, and patients can ask about clinical trials where we're using some of these combinations, and that's really kind of the latest and greatest.

Lee Swanson:

Jakafi has been kind of the standard of care, the go-to drug for myelofibrosis at least.

Dr. O'Connell:

Yes. So ruxolitinib is approved for myelofibrosis. It's also approved for polycythemia vera, and some of the work that was presented at this meeting include combinations with PI3 kinase inhibitors with pegylated interferons, which is interesting, and also there are some other nascent combinations coming forward that we're really excited about to see if we can optimize and do better than what we've done so far with ruxolitinib alone.

Lee Swanson:

So there's some encouraging news, some good hope for patients on the horizon.

Dr. O'Connell:

Definitely. Absolutely. And the most exciting aspect is that more and more is coming out so the options are going to expand. It's just a matter of time.

Lee Swanson:

Okay. Terrific. Thank you very much for your time.

Dr. O'Connell:

Thanks for having me.

Lee Swanson:

I'm Lee Swanson. This is the American Society of Hematology conference. We're in San Diego.

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