

European Association of NeuroOncology Magazine

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Hottinger AF, Hundsberger T

*European Association of
NeuroOncology Magazine 2014; 4 (3)*

134-135



Homepage

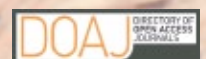
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The Swiss Working Group Brain Tumor of the Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research

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In Switzerland, like in any other country, cancer remains one of the most important risks for patient mortality. The development of a better understanding of cancer and the research for new, improved treatments remains key. Recognizing these challenges, the Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) was created in 1965 as a non-profit organization to address those issues and to promote clinical trials in oncology all over Switzerland. The Working Group on Brain Tumors has been developed as a branch of the SAKK to specifically address the issues related to brain tumors.

Over the years, thanks to the work of its previous presidents, including Roger Stupp and Silvia Hofer, this working group has become the center-point for Swiss Neurooncology. The biannual meetings organized by the SAKK have served as a meeting point where not only oncologists, but also neurosurgeons, radiation oncologists, neuroradiologists and neuropathologists can convene, share ideas, and develop new projects. The missions of the Brain Tumor Groups centers on providing an exchange platform for specialists involved in the management of patients with primary and secondary brain tumors, on providing regular post-graduate education in neurooncology to ensure the highest possible level of care for patients and to foster clinical and translational research.

■ Science and Research

In recent years, a number of projects have been completed by the Swiss Neurooncology community. For instance, Dr Th. Hundsberger aimed to assess the clinical and radiological parameters of patients with brainstem tumors treated in Switzerland and to evaluate their outcome. This work, published recently, demonstrated that histological verification of adult BSGs is feasible and has an impact on postoperative treatment. We further demonstrated that low-grade gliomas can simply be followed or treated with radiotherapy alone. Radiochemotherapy with temozolomide can safely be prescribed for high-grade gliomas without additional CNS toxicities.

One specific project has been key to strengthen the links between Swiss Neurooncology Centers and has allowed us to demonstrate the feasibility of an “all Swiss” clinical trial: The ARTE trial, launched by Dr G. Tabatabai and Prof M. Weller, has included, to date, over 50 of the 60 planned patients. This randomized phase II trial aims to evaluate the role of bevacizumab (Avastin®) in addition to hypofractionated radiation therapy in elderly patients. Elderly patients with GBM

represent a specific challenge, as one must carefully balance the risk of additional toxicity linked to the treatment in this population of fragile patients. This trial will not only provide preliminary information about the efficacy of this treatment combination, but also provides a unique platform for translational and imaging research with both MRI and FET-PET. The value of this project has been recognized internationally and the follow-up study will be implemented as a phase III trial by the EORTC.

The SAKK Brain Tumor Group is also working in close collaboration with an initiative led by Prof A. Raabe from the Inselspital University Hospital Bern to establish the Swiss Glioma Network. This prospective database will include clinical and imaging data as well as a virtual tumor biobank, and aims to realize scientific projects in the field of neurooncology in Switzerland. A number of specific projects have already been linked to this platform including an evaluation of the prognostic role of neurosurgical resection in recurrent GBM. This project is being led by Dr Ph. Schucht. This database will also allow for comparisons in the management of patients and provide opportunities to harmonize treatment strategies. Indirectly related to this project, our colleagues from the Cantonal Hospital of Sankt Gallen, under the lead of Dr Putora, have developed a method to analyze and compare the decision trees for the management of recurrent GBMs. This project has allowed identifying over 100 parameters that are being taken into account by the different institutions for the management of these patients, and also allows to identify widespread consensus and/or discrepancies between institutions.

The Brain Tumor Working Group is also participating in the successful national and international implementation of a database that collects clinical and histological information on gastric cancers that have spread to the CNS (www.gastriccancerregistry.org). This venture is led by Dr S. Hofer and J. Feilchenfeldt.

■ Annual Swiss Neurooncology Meeting

Postgraduate education also represents a key aspect to ensure the highest possible quality of care for patients with brain tumors. The Annual Swiss Neurooncology Meetings have been implemented to provide an up-to-date and optimal teaching environment to review both the basic aspects in brain tumors and to provide a platform to present the latest developments. In 2013, the meeting has been held in Lugano (organized by Dr Pesce) jointly with our colleagues from Northern Italy, and this year we had the pleasure to welcome our

French colleagues from the Association des Neurooncologues d'Expression Française (ANOCEF) in Lausanne. Given the wide success of these 2 previous editions, the next meeting will be held jointly with our colleagues from Austria in Sankt Gallen on September 18–19, 2015. You are all more than welcome to join this meeting. For information please contact www.neurologie.kssg.ch.

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