Second webcast is resounding success: Fletcher reports on ‘Pathway to a Cure’

Dr. Jonathan Fletcher, lead investigator for the Life Raft Group research team was the keynote lecturer at our second web cast. Titled “Pathways to a Cure,” Dr. Fletcher reviewed the ten priority projects that the LRG researchers are pursuing to find a cure for GIST. Although the material presented was not for the light hearted, it was geared to help the lay person understand the mechanisms of resistance that a relatively small percentage of GIST patients immediately display in response to treatment with Gleevec (imatinib) and the patterns of resistance displayed by most GIST patients following an initially positive response to such treatment. After a 45 minute presentation, Dr. Fletcher had

By Norman Scherzer
Executive Director, LRG

GIST and CML patient group representatives convened the weekend of June 29 for the fifth annual patient summit in Bad Nauheim Germany. Representing GIST organizations in Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States, over twenty delegates had the opportunity to hear plenary sessions on Strategic Alliances and meeting the challenges of coping with a chronic disease. They also attended a series of GIST medical workshops presented by three expert GIST specialists, Drs. Peter Hohenberger, surgeon, Germany, Peter Reichardt, oncologist, Germany and Jean-Yves Blay, oncologist, France.

The three presentations, along with a combined expert panel discussion, provided an excellent review of the state of the art in GIST management, including an overview, the role of surgery, meeting the challenge of managing progressive disease and updates on clinical trials. Reviewing my notes from these lectures and importantly, from informal discussions afterwards. These are the highlights:

- A significant number of reports of disease progression turn out to be false, particularly during the first year of treatment. It was important for the clinician to listen carefully to the patient to see how they are feeling and to seek a re-evaluation of the CT Scan readings by an experienced radiologist.
- When progression does occur it is important to try to understand whether this is caused by pharmacokinetics or by genetic resistance. In the former situation the patient is not getting enough drug, sometimes because of compliance issues (the patient does not take all the drug that is prescribed). In the latter situation, the patient may be resistant to treatment

Facebook is now available! See LRG website for details.
More highlights from ASCO 2007

By Jerry Call
Science Coordinator, LRG

Wound Healing

Dr. C.P. Raut and his Dana-Farber colleagues presented a poster about wound healing and surgery during sunitinib treatment. They compared complications from wound healing after surgery in patients on sunitinib therapy versus those on imatinib therapy. Their conclusions were:

1. In this study, there were no significant differences in wound-healing complication following cytoreductive procedures between patients with metastatic GIST on sunitinib or imatinib therapy, despite the broader spectrum of RTK inhibition by sunitinib.
2. Given the relatively small sample size (sunitinib = 26, imatinib = 46), and the retrospective nature of this analysis, further studies will be required to confirm these results.
3. The current practice is to continue sunitinib until 1-2 days prior to surgery and to resume as soon as possible after hospital discharge, which usually coincided with the patient’s first postoperative visit.

For details, see abstract #10044.

Congestive Heart Failure

Dr. A. Y. Khakoo and colleagues at MD Anderson presented a poster describing the “Rare incidence of congestive heart failure in GIST and other sarcoma patients receiving imatinib therapy”. They reviewed 219 patients enrolled on imatinib trials and concluded congestive heart failure was rare and only observed in one elderly patient with known prior cardiac disease. They also recommended that patients who develop potential cardiac adverse events (PCAEs) while on imatinib should be treated with diuretics, ACE-inhibitors and beta-blockers with continuation of imatinib as clinically indicated.

Nilotinib Phase I

Updated results for “a phase I study of nilotinib (AMN107)” alone and in combination with imatinib in patients with imatinib-resistant GIST” were presented in abstract form by Dr. Margeret Von Mehren of Fox Chase Cancer Center. In this study of heavily pretreated patients, 18 patients received nilotinib alone and 35 patients received a combination of imatinib and nilotinib (in different dose combinations).

Median progression-free survival for this phase I trial was 134 days (about 4½ months) overall and 178 days (about 6 months) for patients receiving nilotinib alone. Six patients experienced dose limiting hyperbilirubinemia or skin rash. See abstract 10023 for more details.

NOTE: This phase I trial is now closed. The phase III trial is now open at three sites in the U.S. Fox Chase in Philadelphia, Pa., Dana Farber in Boston, Mass. and Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. Ten sites in total are planned in the U.S. Four are planned in Canada. Four sites are open in Europe. One site each is open in Taiwan and Australia.

Hypoglycemia

Dr. B. Rikhof and colleagues presented an abstract reporting on their experience with non-islet cell tumor induced hypoglycemia (NICTH) in GIST patients. They found that before treatment and/or during follow-up, four of 25 (16%) GIST patients showed increased plasma levels of a protein called ‘big’-IGF-II. Three of these four patients developed NICTH. ‘Big’-IGF-II is a high molecular weight form of IGF-II. According to Rikhof, “The role of IGF-II in GIST is unknown.”

Similar reports of NICTH and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) have been reported in GIST patients by Davda et al., Escobar et al., Guiteau et al., Hamburg et al. and Pink et al.

Compliance and Medical Costs

Dr. R. Halpern and colleagues presented abstract 6618 describing the relationship between compliance with...
time to respond to only a handful of the many questions submitted by the international web cast audience. These included explanations of immortal cell lines (they live forever), the possibility of GIST being passed on to the children of patients (called familial GIST, this is quite rare) and whether GIST patients eventually develop resistance to Gleevec (most do). Dr. Fletcher also responded to questions about how GIST patients develop resistance to Gleevec and other drugs, whether one could determine if there are still live GIST cells, the importance of preserving tumor tissue and whether surgery could prevent resistance from developing.

Dr. Fletcher also took the opportunity to describe the unique collaborative nature of his research team and their dramatic first year progress in implementing nine of the ten priority projects. All of Dr. Fletcher’s presentation and responses to questions will be available shortly on the LRG website: www.liferaftgroup.org

Note: Dr. Fletcher is only the second scientist to have been honored by the Life Raft Group, the first having been Dr. James Watson, Nobel Prize winner. Dr. Fletcher is certified in internal medicine, cytogenetics as well as oncology and holds faculty positions at Harvard Medical School, Mass General Hospital, Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Funding
The biggest hurdle to continuing this vital research is that the initial funding will run out at the end of the second research year—March 31, 2008. We will need to raise approximately 1.4 million dollars a year for at least three additional years to continue the current priority efforts plus a few more that have been identified as necessary to complete our pathway to finding a cure for GIST.

The Life Raft Group research is unique in that it is driven by a strategic plan and supported by a core group of the world’s best researchers who are willing to cooperate with one another and to be held accountable for results. Research dollars are greatly leveraged by capping the administrative overhead (indirect costs) of funded institutions at 10 percent as opposed to typical charges between 50 and 65 percent. If you wish to help support this battle for survival, please make your donations to:

The Life Raft Group
GIST Research Fund
40 Galesi Drive, Suite 19
Wayne, NJ 07470.

Our Next Webcast
Join us on August 23 at 12:00 EST for “GIST” the Basics. Jerry Call and David Josephy, GIST caregivers, break down the complicated world of GIST and GIST treatment in this understandable presentation.
Will you run for my daughter?

By Erin Kristoff, Paul Montuori & Carolina Ponce-Williams

Paul’s Story

After finishing a brutal training run, Paul Montuori asked himself why any sane person would train for a marathon in Bolivia. “On a whim, I told my brother and sister-in-law that I would attempt to run a marathon with them. Little did I know at the time, how hard it would be.

My legs were sore and I realized that I don’t even like to run.” One day later Paul had a purpose and an inspiration.

Driving six hours in one day each weekend to find a good altitude did not sound logical to Paul, so he began searching for a place to spend the night. However, no one was willing to board his hyperactive running partner: his Labrador retriever.

The last place he checked was “La Senda Verde Refugio Natural”. This is where he met Vicky Ossio, the owner. Paul told Vicky why he needed to come every weekend, she then asked him to surprising questions: Why are you running? “Even though I had contemplated this question in my mind many times on those long training runs, I still did not have an answer. I replied with a meaningless response.”

Vicky then asked, “Will you run for my daughter?” Paul was speechless.

Before he knew it, Vicky, an active LRG member had run to her car and returned with several LRG brochures, “She proceeded to tell me that her daughter had been recently diagnosed with a rare cancer. As tears ran down her face, Vicky told me Carolina’s story of her diagnosis in January 2006 and how the charity on the brochures were like angels sent down from heaven. I tried to console her, but I felt helpless and I did not know what to do.”

But Paul did know what to do, “Driving away, I felt like something in me changed. I realized that my problems were insignificant and petty compared to the problems that Carolina faced everyday. One week later I had an answer for Vicky. ‘We want to run for your daughter.’”

Carolina’s Story

When Carolina Ponce-Williams found out about Paul and her mother’s idea she was stunned, “[My husband and I] were both shocked. I showed him the website and he got very excited!”

When she was diagnosed in January 2006, Carolina couldn’t believe that her “benign tumor” was in fact, cancer. “I was in denial honestly. I think it took me about a month when it started hitting me. My mom was doing all the research for me. I didn’t realize what it was. When I came to my appointment with my oncologist and saw people doing chemo it first hit me. I was like, ‘Okay, oh my god.’”

A year-and-a-half later, Carolina is feeling much better, “I feel great, I was very emotional in the beginning. When I received that email from Paul it was perfect in coming. Before I was a little bit better about being sick. Now I can help others.”

She has also found the strength she knew she had inside, “Being strong, I used to think, was to have a thick skin and to survive anything; now I understand that surviving is really accepting the obstacles, learning lessons, and then...teaching them.”

Carolina is bright about her future, despite Gleevec side effects affecting her immune system, “You have to enjoy every day without having to plan for the future. One thing I always tell people is ‘Stop and enjoy right now, enjoy the people you have, live in the moment.’ I regret sweating the small stuff. It doesn’t matter what you have, if you have a positive outlook you can have anything. I know that my positive

See MARATHON 2006, Page 10
tance on the single-regimen therapy.

The ambitious plans and the impressive Year One progress outlined in this report would not be possible in the absence of a closely-knit and highly-interactive GIST scientist research group. Great pains have been taken to enable collaboration without redundancy, such that the team is emphasized over the individual. This carefully coordinated approach continues to maximize the LRG research productivity. The overall objective in this research is to identify combinations of therapies that can provide synergistic benefit with Gleevec in patients with GIST. The specifics of this progress report represents the input of each LRG research team member.

A series of ten “priority” projects were highlighted for immediate funding. The Year One progress for each of these projects is summarized below. With the exception of project B, all have made outstanding progress and are expected to continue in the same fashion for Year Two.

A. Oncogenic signaling mechanisms as novel therapeutic targets: Substantial progress has been made in identifying “downstream” proteins which play crucial roles in channeling the KIT activation stimulus into the GIST cell which are alternate therapeutic targets in GIST. The Year One research highlighted the crucial roles of PI3-K and AKT proteins in maintaining cell growth and has begun to catalog comprehensively the cell proteins that bind to the KIT/PDGFRA oncoproteins in GIST.

B. KIT/PDGFRA Wildtype GISTS: These studies have been hampered by the availability of frozen GIST specimens that lack KIT and PDGFRA mutations. The LRG board of directors and research team discussed strategies for obtaining additional frozen GIST specimens that lack KIT and PDGFRA mutations for Year Two. This project is suspended until suitable samples can be obtained.

C. Primary Resistance: Progress has been made in establishing laboratory models for GIST mutations that show primary resistance to Gleevec, and potent alternative KIT kinase inhibitors of such mutants. Future studies will continue to focus on identifying and validating novel KIT kinase inhibitors that are effective against primary KIT/PDGFRA Gleevec-resistant mutations.

D. Stable disease after imatinib: Stable disease, i.e. GIST cells that are suppressed but not killed by Gleevec, remains a major problem for most patients. Year 1 studies show that clinically stable GIST – in patients receiving Gleevec or Sutent – can contain abundant KIT secondary mutations, which are the starting point for progression to eventual outright Gleevec resistance. Future studies of stable GIST will address KIT/PDGFRA mutational heterogeneity, evaluate new therapies that more effectively induce apoptosis (cell death), and identify new therapeutic targets by gene expression profiling and proteomic methods.

E. Secondary resistance mechanisms & clinical evaluation: Great progress has been made in the past year by developing new human GIST and non-GIST cell lines and mouse xenografts of human GISTS that contain various KIT and PDGFRA kinase domain Gleevec and Sutent resistance mutations. These diverse GIST “models” have enabled identification and preclinical validation of novel small molecule kinase inhibitors with expanded efficacy against the Gleevec-resistant KIT and PDGFRA mutations.

F. Kit Degradation: The Year 1 studies have validated the concept that HSP90 and similar proteins are required to protect KIT in GIST cells. HSP90 can be inhibited by various drugs, resulting in substantial destruction of the KIT oncoproteins in all GIST cell lines tested to date, cessation of growth, and induction of death, in the GIST cells. Future studies will focus on identifying HSP90 inhibitors with greater potency and selectivity for KIT/PDGFRA in GIST.

G. Murine Models: The proposed studies are well underway, with Dr. Besmer’s group having shown that the PI3-K pathway is crucial to KIT oncogenic signaling in the murine GISTs, and that therapeutic inhibition of mTOR can reduce the growth of these GISTs. Continuing studies from Drs. Besmer
### Strategy Table (The color of trial row indicates the trial’s treatment strategy)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapy</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMN-107 (nilotinib, Tasigna)</strong></td>
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<td>NCT00471328</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>GIST</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Imatinib (Gleevec) or Sunitinib (Sutent)</strong></td>
<td>Safety And effectiveness of daily dosing with sunitinib or imatinib in patients with GIST</td>
<td>NCT00372567</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>GIST</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perifosine + Imatinib</strong></td>
<td>Phase II Study of Perifosine plus imatinib mesylate for patients with resistant GIST</td>
<td>MDACC 2004-0968, NCT00455559</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sorafenib (Bay 43-9006,Nexavar)</strong></td>
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<td>NCT00265798</td>
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<td><strong>FR901228 (romidepsin)</strong></td>
<td>FR901228 in treating patients with metastatic or unresectable soft-tissue sarcoma</td>
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<td>GIST/Sarcoma/Ewings</td>
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<td><strong>IPI-504</strong></td>
<td>Safety study of IPI-504 for GIST</td>
<td>NCT00276302</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oblimersen (Genasense) + Imatinib (Gleevec)</strong></td>
<td>Oblimersen and imatinib in treating patients with advanced GIST that cannot be removed by surgery (As we go to press we are advised that this trial has closed)</td>
<td>NCT00091078</td>
<td>I</td>
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<td><strong>MP470</strong></td>
<td>MP470 in treating patients with unresectable or metastatic solid tumor or lymphoma</td>
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<td><strong>Perifosine + Sunitinib (Sutent)</strong></td>
<td>Perifosine + sunitinib for patients with advanced cancers</td>
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<td><strong>Doxorubicin + Flavopiridol</strong></td>
<td>Doxorubicin and flavopiridol in treating patients with metastatic or recurrent sarcoma that are unresectable</td>
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<td><strong>OSI-930</strong></td>
<td>Dose escalation study of daily oral OSI-930 in patients with advanced solid tumors - Sarcoma</td>
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<td><strong>LBH589</strong></td>
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<td><strong>KOS1022</strong></td>
<td>Phase 1 study of oral KOS-1022 in patients with advanced solid tumors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>XL820</strong></td>
<td>Study of XL820 given orally daily to subjects with solid tumors</td>
<td>NCT00350831</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Cancer/Solid Tumor</td>
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</table>

The information below does not include location information. Please visit our website at [www.liferaftgroup.org/treat_trials.html](http://www.liferaftgroup.org/treat_trials.html) for more in-depth coverage of each trial.
(for Gleevec, this includes most patients with a mutation higher than exon 11) or may require higher doses (for Gleevec, patients with an exon 9 mutation).

• Two best practice recommendations would be for the clinician to ask each patient in a non-threatening way if they have taken all their medication and for routine plasma testing to become a standard adjunct to treatment. (Note: The Life Raft Group has asked Novartis to follow-up on the subset of patients in the early Gleevec clinical trials who were given routine plasma testing over several days to retest them to determine whether there have been any changes in their plasma levels-i.e., in the level of Gleevec in their body).

• Some drugs may not make it to the marketplace even though they show efficacy for some GIST mutations. An example may be the Novartis drug PKC412 which seems to work for exon 18 mutations in PDGFRA. The irony is that Gleevec does not seem to work for such exon 18 mutations.

Several new clinical trials were noted:

• An EORTC randomized trial comparing Gleevec to Gleevec plus surgery at the point of best response within one year
  • A new trial for 600mg of Gleevec plus RAD001
  • A single agent trial for 800mg of Nilotanib (AMN107)

The high point of the meeting may well have been the adoption of the Bad Nauheim Declaration by the assembled GIST community to promote access to state-of-the-art treatment for all GIST patients wherever they may live.

**The Bad Nauheim Declaration**

**Background Statement**

1. Gastrointestinal stromal tumour (GIST) is a rare cancer of the mesenchymal (connective) tissues of the stomach, gastrointestinal tract and related organs. The incidence of this cancer is approximately 12-15 per million of population, and it is regarded as a rare disease. It accounts for less than one half of one percent of all cancers diagnosed.

2. In the early years of the twenty first century the treatment of GIST was revolutionized by the introduction of tyrosine kinase inhibitors. Prior to their introduction a patient diagnosed with advanced GIST had a life expectancy of less than two years. With tyrosine kinase inhibitors (e.g. imatinib for first-line therapy) the prognosis of patients has improved significantly. Over 85 percent of patients respond to these drugs and benefit for many years.

**Purpose**

1. The worldwide advocacy groups supporting patients with GIST are all concerned about the differences that exist in the way in which patients are treated, and the ways in which healthcare systems often delay access to new treatments.

2. We believe that all patients should be treated equally regardless of race, nationality, faith, age, sex or economic status.

3. This document is a consensus declaration from the GIST patient advocacy groups assembled at Bad Nauheim, Germany on Sunday 1 July 2007. It identifies a set of basic standards which we call on doctors, other healthcare practitioners, hospital administrators and health care funders to adopt and to build upon for the benefit of the
Katharine Kimball faces GIST one surgery at a time

By Katharine Kimball

My journey with GIST is a long haul that has taken me from Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra, Australia to San Antonio, Texas. It is a journey that began in October 2002 when I found a rather large mass in my abdomen and was concerned enough that I phoned my GP for an appointment. When she felt the mass, she immediately made an appointment for a CT scan. I had the scan done within an hour and then returned to my GP’s office. After consulting with her partner, she informed me that they thought I had a lymphoma. She wanted me to go to Urgent Care at Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) “to get into the system.”

The following week I met with a surgeon at PAH who thought I either had a lymphoma or a sarcoma. A week later I had surgery to remove an 8.5cm GIST tumor from my small intestine. I was in hospital for one week. My discharge papers read “unfavorable prognosis”. I didn’t know what that meant. So when I arrived home, I got on the Internet and googled gastrointestinal stromal tumor. That is how I found the Life Raft Group. I joined and sent an email asking for information and soon felt I belonged to a special family. That was in December 2002.

Not long after my diagnosis, my husband, Ian left. It was at this time that an opportunity arose for me to accept a three-month teaching position in Shanghai, China. I left for China in October 2003. This was a perfect opportunity for me, as I would return just in time for my next scans. After scans in January, I went to Nanjing, where I had been offered another job and shortly thereafter, Beijing. I spent a wonderful year in China teaching mathematics and was able to forget about GIST until my return to Australia in October 2004. My scan that month revealed I had a recurrence and was once again scheduled to have surgery at PAH in November.

By the time I had my next scans at the end of January, I had two new tumors. This time it was recommended that I begin Glivec. However, in Australia this is not just a matter of having your oncologist write a prescription. The prescription had to be approved by Medicare at their office in Tasmania.

In the meantime I moved to Australia’s capital, Canberra, to stay with my father as I wanted to visit with him before returning to the U.S. where my children (2 boys and 3 girls) were anxious for me to return. I also had to make the decision as to whether to have surgery in Australia or in the U.S. After some consideration and consulting with my third surgeon, I decided to have surgery in Canberra. It went well; five tumors were removed along with part of my bladder. A few

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imatinib and medical costs for patients with CML and GIST. They reviewed past claims data from a large national US health plan. Compliance was measured with a medication possession ratio ((days of imatinib during follow-up / days of follow-up)*100). The compliance categories were; good compliance was equal to or better than 90 percent; medium compliance was between 70 and 89.9 percent and poor compliance was less than 70 percent. Only 35 percent of GIST patients had “good compliance”. The compliance was rated as poor in 46 percent of GIST patients and in 40 percent of CML patients. Mean medical costs across all patients were lower and less variable with good compliance ($22,882 ± 22,791) than with medium ($40,366 ± 68,186), p=0.007) and poor ($104,961 ± 190,551), p<0.001). Mean medical costs for GIST patients were: good=$28,318 (±24,781); medium=$33,270 (±35,356, p=0.584); and poor=$62,235 (±68,751, p<0.001). The authors concluded “Good imatinib compliance was associated with significantly lower medical costs. Mean total medical costs were 78 percent lower with good compliance relative to poor. Compliance is an important treatment issue for both clinical and medical cost outcomes.”

Sutent Resistance

Dr. Michael Heinrich gave an oral presentation “Mechanisms of sunitinib malate (Sutent) resistance in (GISTs)” in this study of two GIST patients (one with an exon 11 primary mutation and one with an exon 9 primary), a total of 11 lesions (tumors) were analyzed; nine of the eleven were progressing lesions. As Dr. Heinrich and colleagues have previously reported, resistance to sunitinib was highly correlated with secondary mutations. Lesions with secondary mutations in the drug binding pocket (exons 13 and 14) became insensitive to imatinib but retain their sensitivity to sunitinib. Lesions that developed secondary mutations in the KIT activation loop (exons 17 at codons 816, 820, 822 and 823) and in the extended activation loop (exon 18) were resistant to both imatinib and sunitinib.

A novel mutation was discovered in
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**INTERNATIONAL TRIALS**

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<td>NCT00471328</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors</td>
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<td>PKT787 (vatalanib)</td>
<td>For treatment of metastatic GISTs resistant to imatinib</td>
<td>NCT00117299</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>GIST</td>
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<td>AZD2171</td>
<td>The Biological Activity of AZD2171 in GIST</td>
<td>NCT00385203</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>GIST</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB1010 (masitinib)</td>
<td>Evaluation of the efficacy and the tolerance of AB1010 in first line treatment for inoperable, locally advanced or metastatic GIST.</td>
<td>Masitinib</td>
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<td>LBH589 in adult patients with advanced solid tumors or cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMS-354825 (dasatinib, Sprycel)</td>
<td>A Phase I Study of BMS-354825 in patients with solid tumors</td>
<td>NCT00339144</td>
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<td>Tumors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be sure to check out our Clinical Trials Map

The LRG Clinical Trials map allows patients to clearly identify trials of interest based on location and what they offer. Here is how the map works:

- **Sites with one GIST trial.**
- **Allow GIST patients and those with other tumor types.**
- **Multiple trials ongoing**

You can find the map, along with all of our information on clinical trials at http://www.liferaftgroup.org/treat_trials.html.

**UPDATE**

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and Rubin will produce mice with Gleevec-resistant inherited mutations, which will be very useful in screening for novel therapies against Gleevec-resistant GIST.

**H. Resource Development (imatinib sensitive & resistant):** Exceptional progress has been made in developing new immortal cell lines. Future efforts will be devoted to expanding the panel of immortal cell lines available for drug testing.

**I. Tissue Banks:** Excellent progress has been made in establishing a central repository for frozen and paraffin-embedded GISTs to enable the collective research efforts in the LRG program. Future efforts will focus on genomic and gene expression annotations for the banked specimens, and histopathologic annotation to assure that GISTs from patients already treated with Gleevec include both clinically stable and progressing specimens.

**Pediatric GIST:** Dr. Antonescu has identified several genes that are uniquely active in pediatric GISTs, rather than adult GISTs. Future studies will determine whether these genes can be targeted successfully with drugs, producing therapeutic advances for pediatric GIST. This work is particularly crucial because pediatric GIST patients do not respond as well as adult GIST patients to Gleevec.

Gleevec resistance studies are essential to therapeutic progress in GIST. We hope to substantially expand select studies in the following two years. These studies will likely reveal that combinations of GIST therapies are needed to consolidate initial remissions, forestall the emergence of clinical resistance, and enable increased cure rates.

**ASCO 2007**

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exon 16 (L783V) of one progressing lesion. sunitinib was able to achieve 50 percent inhibition of the in-vitro signaling of this type mutation at a fairly low concentration, however; it was unable to achieve 90 percent inhibition (IC90), even at high doses. The exon 16 mutation was clinically resistant to sunitinib, but the biochemical data for this was less clear according to Dr. Heinrich.

In his conclusions, Dr. Heinrich noted that sunitinib activity in imatinib-resistant GIST is affected by the type of secondary KIT mutation as shown by in-vitro and clinical data. Dr. Heinrich also hypothesized that the anti-angiogenic effects of sunitinib may be insufficient to inhibit GIST progression when the targeted oncogenic kinase (KIT) remains active.
**MARATHON**

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Attitude will hopefully one day cure me. I want to have kids and have grandchildren. I want to be here for all of that. I want it all.”

Carolina is from La Paz, Bolivia and currently lives in Plano, Texas with her husband, Terrance. She is a fourth grade teacher and is looking forward to telling her grandkids how she once had to take a medicine called Gleevec.

Mother and daughter share a moment with the camera at Carolina’s wedding in 2004.

The Marathon
Paul has set up a web page so that he and his family can use the marathon (which will be held in Long Beach, Calif. on October 14, 2007) to raise money for the LRG. Please go to http://3montys4cure.pledgepage.org/to view the page. Paul, his brother Chad and sister-in-law Kira have set a goal of $10,000 to be raised. “Even though it is high it is important to shoot high and think big and actually make a difference. If we give $10,000 it can actually make a difference in something. The key is encouraging people to donate because we are not going to be able to do it alone, we have to extend and encourage other people. I think that we will make the dent. Money talks. Money drives everything.”

You can visit the Long Beach Marathon’s page at http://www.runlongbeach.com/site5.aspx

If you are interested in donating to the LRG in the name of Paul’s cause please visit http://www.liferaftgroup.org/about_support.php or send a check to The Life Raft Group 40 Galesi Dr, Suite 19 Wayne, NJ 07470

The LRG would like to wish good luck to Paul and his family.

**GERMANY**

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4. The global GIST patient advocacy groups will monitor the implementation of this declaration and publicize the healthcare systems demonstrating adherence to it.

The Declaration

The GIST patient advocacy groups collectively call on all those responsible for the treatment and care of patients with GIST to:

1. Ensure that patients are diagnosed promptly and accurately.
2. Provide the information and resources which allow patients access to specialist second opinions.
3. Provide treatment and care to GIST patients through the hands of specialist multidisciplinary teams which conform to standards for a center of expertise in rare diseases. All members of these teams should have specialist knowledge, continuing experience of treating GIST, and participate in national and/or international networking with other centers of expertise.
4. Provide access to expert pathology and mutation analysis services which give doctors and patients the information they need to make an informed clinical decision.
5. Provide accurate and timely information relevant to the patient at each step along the treatment pathway.
6. Provide access to psychological support and treatment.
7. Adopt an internationally accepted treatment guideline (see 8.) and ensure that the resources required to deliver it are available to doctors and patients.
8. Treat patients in line with an internationally accepted treatment guideline informed by the published evidence from scientific and clinical research.
9. Maintain and review funding for treatment so that no patient suffers through failure to treat, or through stopping treatment recommended by specialist doctors.
10. Provide patients with access to clinical trials regardless of race, nationality, faith, age, sex or economic status.
days later I was well on the road to recovery. However, by noon I was very nauseated and I began vomiting bile. As luck would have it, my surgeon was away in Sydney all weekend but he was being advised of my situation and giving instructions for my care. I had an NG tube inserted (very uncomfortable) and while it helped with the vomiting, it did not completely stop it.

When my surgeon returned, he immediately came to see me to discuss my situation. He told me I was probably going to have another surgery to repair the leak in my intestine which a CT had confirmed. I didn’t want to have another surgery so soon and prayed that it wouldn’t be necessary; however, exactly one week after my initial surgery, I was scheduled for another. It turned out to be a blessing after all, as another tumor was found. It was small and may have been missed the week before as tumors often hide in the folds of the small intestine. By the time I left hospital the next week, I had lost a total of 15 pounds and felt very weak. A couple of weeks later, I resumed taking 400mg Glivec.

In July 2005, I returned to San Antonio, Texas where I had lived many years earlier. I became a patient at Wilford Hall Medical Center (WHMC) on Lackland Air Force Base. I continued to have clear scans until February 2006 when another 4.8 cm tumor was found on my small intestine. I had another surgery and was put on Gleevec at 600 mg. I found the side-effects much more severe at that dose. Two months later, another tumor was found, though this one was small. Another surgery so soon after the last one was no longer an option, so I began taking 50 mg of Sutent but dropped to a four-weeks-on, two-weeks-off schedule at 37.6 mg because of my neutrophil count.

In October 2006, I received approval to be seen by Dr. Jonathan Trent at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (MDA) in Houston, Texas. I continued to see my local oncologist but went to MDA every 3 months for scans. I remained stable on Sutent for exactly one year. At my appointment in May of this year, Dr. Trent informed me that my tumor was growing. The recommendation was surgery. My sixth GIST surgery was scheduled at Brooke Army Medical Center on June 21. It was successful and I was home within a few days. I have resumed 37.5 mg Sutent but dropped to a four-weeks-on, two-weeks-off schedule at 37.6 mg because of my neutrophil count.

In many respects I am lucky. I now have a wonderful new man in my life, Phillip who has been very supportive. I have great children who care and worry about me. Moreover, I feel very blessed; while many dread surgery, I feel very fortunate that it is still an option for me at this time.