

JKCCN E-Newsletter Supplement, 7/7/10: RTOG Semiannual Meeting

The RTOG semiannual meeting was recently held on June 17-20, 2010, in Philadelphia, PA. Please see below for some important updates and announcements!

Research Associate Update

At the Research Associate (RA) Committee meeting on Friday, Terry Thomas, RA Committee Chair, presented a striking account of her plethora of responsibilities during one recent week. She emphasized how in order to accomplish several different kinds of tasks during the course of the day and week, research associates must be very efficient, flexible, and able to multi-task. Terry commended the Ras for their efforts.

Announcements were made by the RA Committee that pertained to research associate recognition, workload, and a new resource for RAs. RTOG will present the new Outstanding RA Award to research associates that have been selected through a nomination process. More details and forms will be posted on the RTOG website in the coming months. In addition, the RA Committee will soon be issuing a second survey to RAs, after receiving 258 responses during the last survey. If you think of any questions you would like to be included in the upcoming survey, the Committee would like to hear from you! Lastly, the Committee is currently working on a source document template repository, which will serve as a shared resource for RAs and should be available in the near future.

Audit Update

From December 2009 through May 2010, the RTOG audit team conducted a total of 76 audits. Forty-five (45) were considered “Acceptable,” 16 were designated “Acceptable, requires follow-up,” and 15 were “Unacceptable.” Please note that RTOG has instituted a new program, wherein institutions that receive “Acceptable” scores for three audits in a row will be eligible to receive the “Award of Excellence.”

Plenary Session Update

Walter Curran, MD, Chairman of RTOG, reported at the Plenary Session on Saturday that so far in 2010, 1,066 patients were accrued to RTOG trials. The accrual goal for this year is 2,558 patients. Thirty-six (36) trials are currently open, and 3 out of an estimated total of 9 new trials have activated so far this year.

Meg Mooney, Chief of the Clinical Investigations Branch, CTEP (NCI), spoke about improving the timeline for cancer trial activations. CTEP’s new guidelines for protocol activation (the timeline

from NCI concept approval to activation by local IRBs) are 300 days for phase III trials and 210 days for phase II trials. The guidelines will go into effect on January 1, 2011.

Special Trial Focus

One of the sessions held on Friday was specifically directed toward research associates and pertained to RTOG 0920, which is entitled “A Phase III Study of Postoperative Radiation Therapy (IMRT) +/- Cetuximab for Locally-Advanced, Resected Head and Neck Cancer.” The sample size for this trial is 700 patients. This trial is testing whether the addition of cetuximab to radiation therapy will improve overall survival (OS) in postoperative patients with intermediate risk following surgery (within 7 weeks prior to registration). Please note that this trial mandates tissue submission for central EGFR analysis, as well as HPV analysis for oropharyngeal patients (0.5 credit will be given for tissue). This study also includes a QOL/Patient-reported Outcomes component, in order to assess the extent to which cetuximab interferes with life functions when given in this setting. This study will soon be open at TJU, so please let us know if you would like to open it at your institution.

An update was given in regard to RTOG 0841, “Efficiency of Screening for Depression in Cancer Patients Receiving Radiotherapy.” This study is scheduled to re-open this month, but for the first 6 months only Community Clinical Oncology Program institutions (CCOPs) and academic institutions that already have IRB approval will be able to enroll patients. TJU did not have the chance to open this trial before it temporarily closed to accrual very quickly after opening, so we have to wait a short while before being able to accrue to R0841.

If you have an RTOG-related question, please contact Kelly Shipman at Kelly.shipman@jeffersonhospital.org or 215-955-2135.