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*Submission of a
'Clinical-Trial-of-One'
Proposal for Review, Critique and
Discussion*

An evidence based attempt to achieve cancer cell stasis via synergistic modulation of multiple cellular pathways (e.g. COX2, NF- κ B, mevalonate, estrogen, and GADD45 α & GADD45 γ) utilizing medications that are readily available, and whose side effect profiles and toxicities are usually relatively benign, well understood and commonly managed.

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Objective

Extension of remission time for a Stage IV Ovarian Cancer patient via blockage of and/or retardation of the reproduction of cancer cells that survived and/or were generated by the chemotherapy series used to achieve remission.

Clinical History

CM is a 55 year old female who has completed 8 chemo cycles of a neoadjuvant treatment plan for Stage IV ovarian cancer, and who is now in remission. The chemotherapy agents used were carboplatin and docetaxel. Surgery occurred post cycle 4 and resulted in the removal of all visible tumor mass. At diagnosis, biopsy showed a tumor that expressed CK7, CK20, and WT1 and was negative for P16. Post surgery biopsy revealed tumor masses on both ovaries that appear to have been platinum/taxol sensitive – with those tumors being largely necrotic. A second tumor type of approximately one centimeter was found on one of the fallopian tubes, and this tumor appeared to be resistant to the chemo regimen as it was found to be 100% viable. The phenotype of this tumor has not been characterized.

Strategy

This regimen will attempt to utilize currently available medications to safely impact cellular pathways that uniquely drive or enable the progression of cancer cells, with one set of pathways being unique to many gynecological and breast cancers.

The patient's safety and wellbeing will remain the highest priority.

The agents that will be utilized have been recommended by a clinical pharmacist based on his professional judgment after an in-depth review of a combination of experimental and clinical evidence that has been data-mined from the literature, and which suggests a reasonable probability of success.

These recommendations and the reasoning behind them have been discussed with the patient and the patient's physician, and have been modified as appropriate based on those discussions. All actions taken with regard to this protocol will be communicated with the patient's physician prior to implementation, and no actions will be taken without his concurrence.

Although the dosages of the agents that will be used may tend to be at the high end of currently accepted doses, they will fall within those currently used to safely treat other indications - and will be appropriately scaled to the patient's physical parameters. Additionally, doses will be slowly titrated and patient response will be closely monitored to avoid medication misadventures.

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The pathways that will be targeted include NF- κ B, Gadd45 α /Gadd45 γ and those impacted by COX2 and Estrogen.

The regimen will consist of a baseline regimen coupled with a ‘burst’ regimen of limited duration that will be periodically implemented.

Regimen Recommendations

Included in this regimen are agents that should be administered on a continuous basis and agents that may be more safely utilized over short periods of time on a periodic basis. The agents that should be administered on an intermittent basis have therefore been allocated to periodic short term administration schedules – or ‘bursts’. The agents proposed at this time for both the continuous and ‘burst’ parts of this protocol have been detailed below.

Continuous (Baseline) Agents –

These medications will be given daily, and their dosages are not expected to vary.

<u>Targeted Pathway</u>	<u>Therapeutic Class</u>	<u>Agent</u>	<u>Dose</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
COX2	NSAID	Aspirin	325 mG	Twice a Day
Estrogen	Aromatase Inhibitor	Physician’s Choice		

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‘Burst’ Agents –

These medications will be titrated to target dosages as tolerated over a period of 2-3 weeks and will continue after titration for a period of two weeks, after which they will be stopped until the next cycle.

At this time it is believed that the ‘bursts’ will occur every 4 months.

<u>Targeted Pathway</u>	<u>Therapeutic Class</u>	<u>Agent</u>	<u>Target Dose</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
NF-κB	NSAID	Salsalate	1500 mG	Twice a Day
Mevalonate	Statin	Lipitor® (atorvastatin)	80 mG	Daily
GADD45α & GADD45γ	Will rely on salicylate from the salsalate dose to impact this pathway. If cancer appears to be reoccurring it is recommend that either diclofenac or sulindac be added to the regimen to more aggressively impact this pathway. Finasteride is a non-NSAID option that should be seriously considered if diclofenac or sulindac are contemplated. Finasteride would make an aromatase inhibitor mandatory.			

Most Likely Regimen Modifications –

In case an agent proves unacceptable or loss of remission appears to be occurring the following therapeutic interchanges should be considered.

- 1. If chemotherapy is re-initiated this regimen must be reevaluated.** It is believed that NSAID levels sufficient to impact the NF-κB pathway at chemotherapy infusion will significantly impair the action of platinum based chemo agents, but are appropriate 48 hours post chemotherapy.¹⁶ Additionally, aspirin at any dose would be a poor choice in patients with impaired platelet production.
- The pulse dose of salsalate could be replaced with a titration of aspirin to a target dose of 5.4 grams per day delivered in 4-5 doses as tolerated. (note: 5.4 grams is the commonly accepted max daily dose)
- Any lipophilic statin could be used in lieu of atorvastatin as long as the target dose is set at the agent adjusted dose for artherosclerosis reversal.
- If the COX2 aspirin dosing is unacceptable meloxicam or celebrex are the recommended alternatives.
- 5. If loss of remission appears to be occurring the following actions are recommended –**

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- a. Replace the ‘pulse’ phase’s salsalate with aspirin at a target dose of 7 grams per day divided into 4-5 doses. (the baseline regimen’s COX2 aspirin dose should be counted as part of this daily target dose)
- b. Add diclofenac or sulindac to the regimen’s ‘burst’ phase to more aggressively attempt to impact the GADD45 α & GADD45 γ pathways.
- c. Consider adding finasteride 5-10 mG three times per day as a non-NSAID alternative to diclofenac or sulindac for the GADD45 α & GADD45 γ pathways. Its use would require co-administration of an aromatase inhibitor.

IMPORTANT –

1. The target salsalate dose will vary as a function of gender, height, and weight. The dose has to be titrated on an individual basis.
2. Never give high dose finasteride to cancer cells that are stressed or damaged. The pathways it works on enhance cell damage repair when the cells are stressed, and it is believed this will actually reduce cancer cell kill rates.

Supporting Rationale

It is extremely difficult to kill all cancer cells with chemotherapy protocols. The surviving cells will continue to grow and generate new tumor masses if they’re allowed to. These tumors are likely to be spread throughout the body, and to be resistant to previously used chemotherapy agents. Additionally, chemotherapy regimens – particularly those that attack DNA (e.g. platinum based agents) can generate new neoplasms.

Thus, it is desirable to impair these cancer cells’ growth and/or to catalyze their death. However, cancer cells are difficult to selectively kill. This regimen targets cellular processes that are uniquely unregulated in cancer cells and attempts to bring them into a state of regulation that will slow their growth or enable them to recognize the need to enter apoptosis.

NF- κ B is one of the pathways that this protocol targets. Many NSAIDs are capable of impacting this pathway, and of inhibiting cancer cell growth and/or inducing apoptosis. But, translation of this property to humans is challenging because it is difficult to safely achieve free plasma concentrations that are sufficient to elicit the desired effect because of drug metabolism, associated toxicities, and plasma protein binding.

Salicylate based NSAIDs (aspirin and salsalate) are pharmacokinetically unique in that their metabolism and plasma protein binding is saturable – thus enabling the generation of significant free plasma levels. It is known that the levels that are safely achievable are sufficient to impact NF- κ B as the result of

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studies into their ability to shut down cellular crosstalk from the NF-κB pathway to insulin receptors.^{1-7, 63-64}

The selective-COX2-inhibitor celecoxib also appears to be capable of impacting NF-κB, but it shares the metabolism and protein binding limitations the NSAIDs have. However, it is capable of impacting this pathway at much lower concentrations than the NSAIDs do. It appears probable that this is the basis for its ability to impact colorectal adenomas and adenomatous polyps at twice daily 400 mG doses.^{13, 15, 21} Despite an impressive body of evidence supporting its ability to impact cancer growth and propagation it was not chosen as the primary agent for NF-κB impact because of its questionable status relative to cardiovascular events and physicians' reluctance to use it because of those questions.

COX-2 seems to be associated with tumor metastasis. There are many agents that can suppress its influence. The ones considered for this protocol include normal dose aspirin, low dose celebrex, and max dose meloxicam. Celebrex and meloxicam have fewer gastrointestinal side effects because of their selectivity for COX-2 over COX-1. Any one of these three agents would have been a good choice. Ultimately aspirin was chosen.

There remains significant controversy over why statins are capable of slowing tumor growth and/or inducing tumor cell apoptosis.⁴¹⁻⁴⁷ However, there is significant evidence that concurrent exposure to NSAIDs or selective-COX2-inhibitors and statins significantly lowers the concentrations required to induce apoptosis for both the statin and the NSAID/selective-COX2-inhibitor.^{18, 20, 22} Although statins are also limited by metabolism and protein binding issues, it is hoped that sufficient synergism will be achieved by the addition of hydrophobic statins to this regimen.

Estrogen receptors are reported to drive the growth and progression of many ovarian cancer tumors. In fact, it is reported that > 90% of confirmed ovarian cancers have lost their progesterone receptors' function. This allows unopposed estrogen receptor stimulation of the tumor's cells, and it has been reported that > 80% have retained their estrogen receptors' functionality.⁷⁴ Thus, it appears mandatory to incorporate an agent into this protocol to block the effect of estrogen on estrogen receptors. Aromatase inhibitors appear to retain their functionality longer than estrogen receptor blockers, and are reported to be better tolerated by patients. Selection of the agent from this category will be left to the patient's physicians, as they are undoubtedly more familiar with the tradeoffs that must be considered to make this recommendation.

The Gadd45α & Gadd45γ pathways are reported to be obligate to apoptosis escape. Among the substances that can impact them are several NSAIDs - with sulindac sulfide, finasteride, diclofenac, flurbiprofen (probably R-flurbiprofen), and sulindac sulfone being among the agents that exert the strongest effect. It is worthy of note that – although several different reasons have been proposed –

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these agents are repeatedly reported in journal articles as being among the top inducers of cancer cell apoptosis. Aspirin (and by extension, salicylate) also impacts this pathway, but is not nearly as powerful as the aforementioned agents. But - once again - the problems of metabolism, protein binding, and toxicity rear their ugly heads. Other than aspirin, it remains unclear that - for the NSAIDs - sufficient plasma concentrations can be attained before unacceptable side effects arise. Finasteride, on the other hand, is an extremely interesting medication. It has metabolism and protein binding problems just like the others, but it is a powerful agent and its toxicity profile may allow it to be used for short periods of time at much higher doses than what are currently used to reverse BPH or for blocking hormone stimulation of prostate cancer.⁶⁷⁻⁶⁹ The caveat for this medication, though, is that by inhibiting the metabolism of testosterone it appears the body is driven to generate more estrogen. Thus, if this agent is to be used for the treatment of a gynecological or breast cancer co-administration of an aromatase inhibitor would be mandatory.

Although PPAR- γ was also considered as a potential target, thalidomide was the only agent capable of impacting PPAR- γ that was believed to be safe enough to incorporate into this protocol. It was ultimately decided that there was not enough time to appropriately research this agent before the protocol would be needed, and that its previous controversies would stretch the patient's physician's ability to buy-in to supporting this effort to the breaking point.

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