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Elderly patients with cancer

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Hoping for light at the end of the tunnel of this omnipresent darned pandemic! It has not yet finished to be the focus of all our attention—even the US American elections superseded the news headlines only very shortly. The numbers of persons infected with COVID 19, availability of hospital beds and of free capacity in intensive care units as well as availability of the new vaccines keep us engaged.

However, after the pandemic, previously unresolved problems will not have disappeared. One of those open questions is the care for elderly persons with cancer. Cancer incidence increases steeply with age. The demographic changes resulting from the generation of baby-boomers reaching retirement age will soon challenge the health care system by the sheer number of newly diagnosed cancer patients requiring adequate oncologic management.

With a special issue on “Cancer in the elderly”, the *Magazine of European Medical Oncology (MEMO)* offers a platform to provide support in this complex but rewarding field of medicine. Each elderly person has its individual history, potential comorbidities, impairments but also resources. Thoughtful and empathic management of each individual patient is mandatory at all times and absolutely required for elderly persons. Defining and communicating realistic goals of therapy, as well as knowledge of age-related physiologic changes and organ functions enables us to choose adequate oncological therapies for persons in advanced age.

“Cancer in the elderly” has been one of the most dynamic fields in oncology of the last decade. There

is now much more evidence guiding treatment decisions and performance in elderly cancer patients. We happily collected the following contributions

- Prof. Martin Hohenegger summarizes age-related pharmacokinetic changes in organ functions in order to prevent over- or underdosage of cancer drugs [1].
- Drs. Wenkstetten-Holub, Fangmeyer-Binder and Prof. Fasching describe the prevalence of comorbidities in the elderly population [2].
- PhD Max Marhold describes the impact of sarcopenia in cancer and preventive measures for sarcopenia [3].
- Finally, I will provide highlights of the Guidelines of the American Society of Clinical Oncology on Cancer in the Elderly, published in 2018 by a high-caliber team of experts moderated by Supriya Mohile [4].

We hope that all of you stay healthy and motivated!

Conflict of interest C. Marosi declares that she has no competing interests.

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