Lentinan: clinical benefit in the management of systemic malignancies

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Sunagawa et al. [1] have provided interesting data in their recent article. Lentinan may also exert significant anti-neoplastic effects against other systemic malignancies. For instance, lentinan is of clinical benefit in the management of esophageal malignancies. When used in conjunction with other chemotherapeutic agents, such as tegafur, it markedly improved the quality of life in these subjects [2]. In addition, the immune status of these cancer patients was improved, as illustrated by the increase in the serum IL-6 levels. Improvement in the Karnofsky performance scale score was also seen at the same time. In addition, the clinical efficacy of the combination treatment was much greater than that of the single agent treatment. Lentinan is also of clinical benefit against acute myeloid leukemia. For instance, the survival rates were significantly improved when lentinan was used in conjunction with chemotherapeutic agents such as cytarabine [3]. In addition, cancer cachexia was markedly attenuated in these patients. A simultaneous increase in the IL-10 levels was also seen.

A clinical benefit of lentinan has also been seen in hepatocellular carcinomas. For instance, the survival rates were significantly improved in hepatic cancer patients who were administered superfine dispersed lentinan-containing food supplements [4]. The prognosis of these patients could be assessed using lentinan-binding CD14⁺ monocytes. Superfine dispersed lentinan-containing food supplementation has also been shown to improve the survival rates in

patients with pancreatic carcinoma. In addition, the quality of life was markedly improved in these patients. These results have been confirmed by Shimizu et al. [5] in a recent study.

Further investigations, including multicenter, prospective, randomized controlled trials and trials with larger numbers of patients and with longer follow-up periods, are needed to verify these results. Hopefully the coming few years will see increased research in this regard.

Conflict of interest No conflicts of interest.

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