

New England Journal of Medicine **Medical Progress in Pancreatic Cancer**

Madrid, April 29th, 2010- *The New England Journal of Medicine* publishes in the Medical Progress section of this week's issue a review article by CNIO investigator Manuel Hidalgo (leader of the Gastrointestinal Cancer Clinical Research Unit), on Pancreatic Cancer. The Medical Progress section provides a succinct yet comprehensive update on a specific disease oriented to the general medical audience. Last time this section dealt with pancreatic cancer was in 1992.

Pancreatic cancer ranks fourth to fifth in cancer related deaths in western countries including Spain. Over the last decade there has been important progress in our understanding, diagnosis and management of pancreatic cancer, though these progresses have not yet been translated into significant improvements in patient's outcome. The article summarizes recent advances in pancreatic cancer biology such as the deciphering of the pancreatic cancer genome recently accomplished by the Johns Hopkins group in which Hidalgo also participated; the availability of mouse cancer models, such as the ones developed at the CNIO by Carmen Guerra and Mariano Barbacid that faithfully replicate the biology of cancer; and the discovery of pancreatic cancer stem cells made by Christopher Heeschen's group, which is now also working at the CNIO. With regards to clinical management the most important advance is the improvement in survival by administering post-operative treatment with chemotherapy and chemoradiation. During the past 2 decades, a few new drugs such as gemcitabine and erlotinib have been approved to treat patients with pancreatic cancer. These treatments, however, are not very effective and do not result in substantial improvement in outcome. A growing list of new drugs with quite interesting mechanisms of action and evidence of activity in preclinical models of pancreatic cancer, are currently in clinical studies. Among them, drugs targeting the SPARC and the Hedgehog pathways, soon to be in clinical studies at the CNIO, are quite promising and hopefully will represent new hope for patients suffering from this disease. Pancreatic cancer is a high priority cancer at the CNIO, with several research groups working in different aspects of the disease ranging from epidemiology and risk studies, basic biology, animal models, experimental therapeutics and clinical trials.

For the full article, please see:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20427809>