This year’s NF conference, the premier annual event in the neurofibromatosis (NF) research and clinical calendar, was held June 8-11 in Monterey, CA. Over 300 people attended including 15 different representatives from biotech and pharmaceutical companies, the largest participation of industry to date. Many attendees praised this year’s conference as one of the best NF meetings in years, due in large part to the meticulous work of the conference co-chairs, Dr. Scott Plotkin from the Harvard Medical School and Dr. Alison Lloyd from University College London.

Many new initiatives were introduced this year such as the Education Symposium Satellite Meeting. This mini symposium was an opportunity for clinicians to share the latest techniques and best practices in diagnosing, monitoring, managing, and operating on plexiform neurofibromas and vestibular schwannomas. The large number of attendees suggested a broad interest in improving clinical knowledge about these conditions, and this sort of symposium could improve NF care worldwide.

Also new to this year’s NF Conference were the early morning Sunrise Sessions. These events were a venue for experts to express their views on important clinical and research topics in a relaxed atmosphere. In these sessions, NF “veterans” shared their years of experience in the field and identified unanswered questions for the future.

In addition, a special session entitled Industry, Government, and Academics presented a complete view of opportunities and regulations in the NF field from different angles. It highlighted resources available for clinical researchers within government, demonstrated how one important company, Novartis, was considering drug discovery and development in rare diseases such as neurofibromatosis, and, most importantly, raised awareness of NF clinical trials in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program (CTEP), and in industry.

This session began with an inspiring keynote presentation by Dr. William Sellers, Director of Oncology Research at Novartis, addressing how novel approaches in drug discovery can result in an increased understanding of drug candidates and faster and better-informed therapies.

Dr. Salvatore La Rosa, Research and Development Director at the Children’s Tumor Foundation (CTF), also spoke at this session and gave an informative overview of the discovery initiatives at CTF, in particular the new Neurofibromatosis Therapeutic Consortium (NFTC). He also highlighted the Foundation’s commitment to providing NF researchers with the “tools” they need through CTF’s Drug Discovery Initiative (DDI) Toolbox.
FROM THE 2013 NF CONFERENCE

Dr. Roger Packer from the Children’s National Medical Center presented an update on the efforts of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program—Neurofibromatosis Research Program (CDMRP-NFRP) and the progress of NF clinical trials. He enthusiastically reported on three new clinical trials arising directly from the work of the NF Preclinical Consortium (NFPC): Cabozantinib for plexiforms, Ganetespib and Sirolimus for MPNSTs, and PD0325901 for plexiforms. These trials either began this year or are in the process of being approved for recruitment. Dr. Packer’s speech informed the conference attendees on the increasing depth of clinical trial study in NF, which is the result of investment in neurofibromatosis research.

Dr. Helen Chen from the National Cancer Institute spoke about work sponsored by CTEP and opportunities to learn about drugs, drug combinations, and clinical trials from previous studies conducted in different areas of cancer research.

Dr. Gregory Reaman of the FDA closed out the conference with an informative presentation explaining the requirements needed by regulators to make a new treatment available to patients.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Roger Packer
Dr. Helen Chen
Dr. Gregory Reaman

< William Sellers, MD, Vice President/Global Head of Oncology, Novartis – “The Genetic Basis for Cancer Therapeutics”

< Gregory Sorensen, MD, Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Healthcare North America – “Innovation in Imaging Techniques”

< David Kwiatkowski, MD, PhD, Brigham and Women’s Hospital / Harvard Medical School / Dana Farber Cancer Institute / Broad Institute “Tuberous Sclerosis Complex: Recent Translational Advances for a Neurocutaneous Disorder Related to NF1 and NF2”

< Frank McCormick, PhD, University of California, San Francisco – “New Approaches for Targeting Ras”

NF Conference 2013 Keynote Speakers

“ASK ME ANYTHING”
Webinar with John Risner
SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

Please send your questions to info@ctf.org and register at www.ctf.org/webinar