

Overview of the EMP- agenda at the MM-Workshop in Washington DC, February 26th – March 1st, 2009

1. The Scientific Presentations

The presentations were very interesting. Many previous findings, presented recently at other symposia (such as the ASH) were confirmed.

The emphasis was on the importance of cytogenetic knowledge of the disease. It is very clear that MM is a very individual disease and that for every patient, the personal "MM identity card" needs to be established so that treatment can be "taylor-made" in order to improve the prognosis of the individual patient.

The number of clinical trials for MM with new drugs and/or combination therapy is increasing. The results in terms of response rates and survival rates are improving in an impressive way.

Very interesting and hopeful was to see the first results of early trials with a new drug: pomalidomide (the successor of lenalidomide). Even in heavily pre-treated patients, this new drug has powerful activity. But of course, further tests are necessary before the medicine will be available. But, it is rather a very optimistic era for MM-patients and many of the scientists present were convinced that, before they retire, MM will become a curable disease !!

Unfortunately I could not attend all sessions as the "PR" was also an important part of the mission!

2. Contacts with other stakeholders / partners

For an umbrella organisation active in the field of MM, collaboration and communication with other MM patient organisations, worldwide, is very important. As we are working in the area of a rare disease, it is very important to exchange information, knowledge and know-how in the field of our disease.

During the MM-workshop, I had several fruitful talks with our colleagues from the IMF (International Myeloma Foundation) and Me (Myeloma Euronet). Both organisations welcome the idea of open communication and exchange of information for the benefit of the MM-patient worldwide.

The MM-workshop was also the ideal environment for contact and communication with MM-specialists and doctors. Ideas were exchanged on how to better organise collaboration with the international MM-specialist community and our organisation. During this meeting, I also had successful talks with the Belgian MM-specialists on how to further collaborate in order to stimulate the access to new treatment for MM-patients in Belgium.

I can look back at a very useful and interesting MM-workshop. The scientific presentations confirm that the treatment options for our disease are increasing in a spectacular way and this makes me very hopeful and optimistic for the future.

The contacts with other patient organisations, with the medical and scientific community and with the industry confirm that our organisation EMP has become an important stakeholder and partner in the field of MM healthcare.

I left Washington DC with hope, energy and enthusiasm, knowing that treatment options for Multiple Myeloma increase in a spectacular way and that the collaboration between the different stakeholders in the field of our disease is intensifying a lot for the benefit of the patient.

This new synergy allows the MM-patient to look forward to a much brighter future than has ever been the case before!

Greetje Goossens
March 2009