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NOVEL ANTIFOLATE COMBINATION THERAPIES

Potentially, life-threatening toxicity remains a major limitation to the optimal administration of antifolates. (see, generally, Antifolate Drugs in Cancer Therapy, edited by Jackman, Ann L., Humana Press, Totowa, NJ, 1999.) In some cases, a supportive intervention is routinely used to permit safe, maximal dosing. For example, steroids, such as dexamethone, can be used to prevent the formation of skin rashes caused by the antifolate. (Antifolate, pg 197.)

Antifolates represent one of the most thoroughly studied classes of antineoplastic agents, with aminopterin initially demonstrating clinical activity approximately 50 years ago. Methotrexate was developed shortly thereafter, and today is a standard component of effective chemotherapeutic regimens for malignancies such as lymphoma, breast cancer, 15 and head and neck cancer. (Bonnadonna G, Zambetti M, Valagussa P. Sequential or alternating doxorubicin and CMF regimens in breast cancer with more than three positive nodes: Ten year results. JAMA 1995;273(7):542-547; Bonnadonna G, Valagussa P, Moliterni A, Zambetti M, Brambilla C. Adjuvant cyclophosphamide, methotrexate, and fluorouracil in node-positive breast cancer: The results of 20 years of follow-up. N Engl J 20 Med 1995;332(14):901-906; and Hong WK, Schaefer S, Issell B, et al. A prospective randomized trial of methotrexate versus cisplatin in the treatment of recurrent squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck. Cancer 1983;52:206-210.) Antifolates inhibit one or several key folate-requiring enzymes of the thymidine and purine biosynthetic pathways, in particular, thymidylate synthase (TS), dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR), and glycinamide 25 ribonucleotide formyltransferase (GARFT), by competing with reduced folates for binding sites of these enzymes. (Shih C, Habeck LL, Mendelsohn LG, Chen VJ, Schultz RM. Multiple folate enzyme inhibition: Mechanism of a novel pyrrolopyrimidine-based antifolate LY231514 (MTA). Advan Enzyme Regul, 1998; 38:135-152 and Shih C, Chen VI, Gossett LS, et al. LY231514, a pyrrolo[2,3-d]pyrimidine-based antifolate that inhibits 30 multiple folate-requiring enzymes. Cancer Res 1997;57:1116-1123.) Several antifolate drugs are currently in development. Examples of antifolates that have thymidylate



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