



155 US Highway 46, Suite 202
Wayne, NJ 07470
(973) 837-9092 (P)
(973) 837-9095 (F)

June 16, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONTACTS: Sara Rothschild (srothschild@liferaftgroup.org)
The Life Raft Group: 973-837-9092
Erin Schwartz (erin.schwartz@themaxfoundation.org)
The Max Foundation: 425-778-8660

FIRST GIST TUMOR BOARD CONVENES FOR LATIN AMERICAN PHYSICIANS

ASCO Event Highlights Medical Issues that Need Attention in Latin America

Chicago, IL--Alianza GIST, in partnership with the Life Raft Group, The Max Foundation, and Tecnológico de Monterrey hosted an event for Latin American physicians on Sunday June 5th at the American Society of Clinical Oncology conference (ASCO). The meeting drew physicians from many countries as they discussed best practices in Latin America for Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor (GIST) and convened a Tumor Board with case discussions. Panelists included Dr. Matías Chacón, Instituto Alexander Fleming (Buenos Aires, Argentina); Dr. Christopher Corless, Oregon Health and Science University (Portland, Oregon); Dr. Eduardo Guzmán, Tecnológico de Monterrey (Monterrey, Mexico); and Dr. Jonathan Trent, MD Anderson Cancer Center (Houston, Texas).

A presentation was made by Rodrigo Salas, President of Fundación GIST México, about a new CME accredited training course available in Spanish through Tecnológico de Monterrey. The goal is for physicians from across Latin America to take this educational course to improve their knowledge of treating and managing GIST. For more information, visit <http://www.fundaciongist.org>.

Both Dr. Chacón and Dr. Guzmán presented challenging GIST cases for discussion. Misdiagnosis was one key issue and a lengthy dialogue followed regarding ways to optimize this process. The highlighted case underscored the necessity to work with pathologists that see many GIST patients.

Causes and possible solutions for progressive disease were also discussed for another case, with many panelists emphasizing the importance of genotyping as a predictor of how GIST tumors respond to drug therapy. The Life Raft Group is able to provide free mutational testing for GIST patients in Latin America through its GIST Collaborative Tissue Bank program. Please visit: <http://www.liferaftgroup.org/TissueBank.html>

Cases such as the ones that Dr. Chacón and Dr. Guzmán presented are not rare in Latin America, nor are they in other parts of the world. These problems reach global dimensions and many issues need to be addressed such as:



155 US Highway 46, Suite 202
Wayne, NJ 07470
(973) 837-9092 (P)
(973) 837-9095 (F)

- Incorrect Diagnosis
- Poor Clinical Trial Availability
- Lack of Mutational Testing
- Poor Access to Safe, Effective, and Affordable Treatment

This forum was an important start to closing the information gap among the medical community and increasing the index of suspicion among those that see GIST patients. The tumor board sets a precedent for establishing a more formal structure of physicians to continue the dialogue about regional and global issues that affect patients in Latin America.

About Alianza GIST:

Alianza GIST was formed in 2009 with the goal to improve the survival of people living with GIST in Latin America. Each year, over 5,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with GIST, a rare form of cancer, for which there is no known cure. Unfortunately, there are no statistics about the incidence of this disease in Latin America; however, research is underway to investigate the rates in the region. At present, the group is comprised of patient advocates from thirteen countries aiming to help close the gap between scientific knowledge and the clinical treatment of GIST, identify and educate more patients and key medical professionals, empower patients to take charge of their own care, and improve access to safe and effective treatments.

www.alianzagist.org

About the Life Raft Group:

The Life Raft Group (LRG) is a 501(c)(3) organization with a simple focus: to cure a form of cancer — GIST (gastrointestinal stromal tumors) — and to help those living with it until then. Our mission is to ensure the survival of GIST patients through a comprehensive approach connecting individual patients' needs, the worldwide community of GIST advocates and the global health and research environment.

www.liferaftgroup.org

About The Max Foundation:

The Max Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives and survival rates of patients with blood cancer and rare cancers worldwide. The vision of The Max Foundation is a world in which all cancer patients have access to the best treatments, care, and support available. Through an International Patient Helpline, each year The Max Foundation provides advocacy and support services to over 20,000 families from more than 100 countries. The Max Foundation helps people enroll in patient access programs, identify paths for access to treatment, and advocate on their behalf, all the while caring for their emotional health.

www.themaxfoundation.org

About Tecnológico de Monterrey:

Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) is a higher education institution that educates students to become responsible citizens who trigger the development of their communities. ITESM promotes in their students humanistic values, an international perspective, and an entrepreneurial culture. ITESM is present throughout México with 31 campuses and in several other countries through its sites and liaison offices.

www.itesm.edu