

# **Improving Healthcare for Oral Chemotherapy Patients: How to Maintain Patient's Medication Adherence**

## **A look at the German “Oralia Initiative”**

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In order to enable pharmaceutical staff in Germany to advise cancer patients, especially in oral cancer therapy, the "Oral Cancer Therapy" initiative was launched in 2010.

The DGOP (German Society for oncology pharmacists) recognized early on that the patient, compared to the IV administration, is given an enormous personal responsibility in the therapy.

Therefore, there is a particularly high need for advice, e.g. on the correct intake, but also on side effect management, which cannot be covered by only some specialized pharmacies.

This resulted in the goal of empowering pharmacy staff throughout Germany to care for cancer patients close to home and at a high-quality level.

At the heart of the initiative is the Oralia database, as a source of information and advisory tool. But also the basic seminar is an essential part of the even more extensive overall concept, in which the basic knowledge of cancer therapy, the consultation and also the handling of the database are trained in a compact form.

We would like to report and discuss all this and more in this symposium.

## Evolution of oral anticancer agents management in Japan

Management of oral anticancer agents is important worldwide because the treatments are performed in outpatient settings and, therefore, adverse events are difficult to manage because they occur at home. In Japan, pharmacists manage oral anticancer treatment with the following efforts: (1) management by oncology pharmacists through outpatient pharmacy services, (2) patient follow-up by telephone, (3) education of community pharmacists and (4) collaboration between hospitals and community pharmacies. The Japanese government updates the content of national health insurance reimbursement every two years to encourage these activities, and outpatient treatment has changed dramatically over the past several years.

In the midst of these global changes, the Japanese Society of Pharmaceutical Oncology (JASPO) is working to develop a certification system for pharmacists (Board-Certified Pharmacist of Ambulatory Cancer Chemotherapy [BPACC] Accredited Pharmacist of Ambulatory Cancer Chemotherapy [APACC]) and guidance related to oral anticancer drugs. JASPO provides an indispensable service in Japan, and its membership now exceeds 5,000 pharmacists.

Japan has learned and developed its medicine from Western countries. In this presentation, as a clinical pharmacist with oncology accreditation, I would like to share new ideas for oral anticancer drug management in Japan.

# **Improving Healthcare for Oral Chemotherapy Patients: How to Maintain Patient's Medication Adherence**

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Patients treated with oral chemotherapy medications have less frequent contact with their prescribers and nurses compared with those receiving IV chemotherapy. Consequently, these patients are at risk of compromised medication adherence to treatment depending on their health literacy, their commitment to taking an oral therapy in their home environment, and drug-related side effects that can be severe if not addressed promptly. There is a need for comprehensive patient education, close monitoring, and effective adverse event management strategies when dealing with patients taking oral chemotherapy. Oncology pharmacists have the training and expertise to provide evidence-based care to cancer patients, including initial treatment decisions and subsequent therapeutic management, supportive care, and survivorship guidance. As experts in anti-cancer medications and their potential adverse effects, oncology pharmacists play a pivotal role in educating other healthcare providers such as nurses, pharmacy staff (i.e., technicians), and medical trainees. In addition, these pharmacists are well-positioned to develop clinical guidelines and other aspects of safe medication utilization in oncology practice. In the United States, oncology pharmacists play a crucial role within multidisciplinary teams involving oncologists, nurses, technicians, and dietitians in delivering patient education and adverse events monitoring and management programs to improve adherence to oral oncology therapies.