Letter to the Editor

Note re: December 1967 Cover of Cancer Research

In a recent review (1) I described the development of folic acid antagonists in cancer chemotherapy. Attention has been called1 to some disparity between my account and the cover and cover legend of the December 1967 issue of Cancer Research [commemorating Dr. Sidney Farber's clinical studies with aminopterin (2), as reviewed by him in his Lasker Award lecture (3), which featured a symposium of a conference on acute leukemia and Burkitt's tumor (pp. 2414–2660).

Dr. Farber (2, 3) did not review the experimental work with folic acid antagonists or the previous attempts such as those by Lewisohn and by Heinle and Welch (all cited in Ref. 1) to alleviate cancer with folic acid compounds. Dr. Farber has stated that the 4-amino analogues of folic acid were synthesized by Dr. Y. Subba Row and his colleagues. I was more specific: I pointed out that the analogues were synthesized by Dr. J. M. Smith's group, including Dr. Dorris Seeger (aminopterin) and Dr. Donna Cosulich (methotrexate). The patent application on methotrexate was filed by Drs. Smith and Cosulich on October 22, 1947, and Dr. Farber records his first clinical use of aminopterin as being in November 1947. I also cited (1) our recommendation of July 1947 that folic acid antagonists be used clinically against blood dyscrasias marked by erythrocytosis or leukocytosis, a suggestion made as a result of studies with rats. In addition, I described the synthesis and biological effects of leucovorin. In sum, I was able to present a more extensive account of the early history of 4-amino folic compounds than is to be found in the report by Dr. Sidney Farber, and I am grateful for the opportunity to do so again. I should also have noted that the microorganism that produced "fermentation" folic acid was isolated by Dr. Henry Piersma from a contaminated culture of Eremothecium ashbyi.2

Thomas H. Jukes
Department of Biophysics and Medical Physics
University of California, Berkeley
Oakland, California 94608

References

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1 Personal communication from Dr. Michael Shimkin, November 19, 1987.

Letter to the Editor

Note re: January 1, 1988 Cover of Cancer Research

I read your legend to the cover of the January 1, 1988 issue of Cancer Research and wish to take exception to your coverage of the history of the human T-lymphotropic viruses.

I am not disputing the major contributions to this field of the three individuals featured on the cover, but not to mention Dr. Yorio Hinuma of the Institute for Virus Research at Kyoto University for his contributions to the virus etiology of adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma (ATLL) and the seroepidemiology studies performed by him and his coworkers in Japan and southeast Asia is a major oversight. As a matter of fact, Gallo, Hinuma, and Miyoshi were awarded the Dr. Armand Hammer award several years ago for their contributions in this field of research. In addition, Hinuma has won many awards in Japan, both private and governmental, for his contributions in medical virology, particularly in HTLV-I research.

This letter is not meant to negate the outstanding contributions made by Drs. Gallo, Blattner, and Takatsuki in the human oncogenic retrovirus research area, but to express the opinion that Dr. Hinuma's and his associates' contributions should have been included in the history of these viruses.

James R. Blakeslee, Jr.
Department of Veterinary Pathobiology
The College of Veterinary Medicine
The Ohio State University
1925 Coffey Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

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James R. Blakeslee, Jr.


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