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## Letters

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## In our lifetime...

There are few, if any, of us who can say we have been lucky enough to escape the ravaging effects of cancer — be it ourselves, a significant other, family member, or friend.

For more years than I care to remember, “a cure for cancer” has been just around the corner. Recently, President Obama called for a cancer cure in our lifetime, and well, now that goal might finally be realized thanks to the remarkable cutting-edge science that is ongoing at our leading pharmaceutical companies. They are developing new and innovative approaches to fighting cancer, which according to PhRMA include: a medicine that inhibits the production of a protein that may interfere with the effectiveness of chemotherapy; a drug that delivers a synthetic version of a substance derived from scorpions directly to brain tumor cells; a medicine designed to induce a powerful immune response to melanoma; a potential first-line treatment and first-in-class medicine designed to target specific cancer cells and kill them, then activate the patient’s general immune system to destroy any remaining cancer cells; and a therapy that uses new nanotechnology to enhance the delivery of medicine to the patient, overcoming obstacles in existing treatments. (Please see the online version of this edition to read more about some of these and other innovative research programs happening at several top companies.)

According to the latest information from PhRMA, pharmaceutical researchers are now working on 861 medicines for cancer. Many are high-tech weapons to fight the disease, while some involve innovative research using existing medicines in new ways.

The medicines in development — all in either clinical trials or under Food and Drug Administration review — include 122 for lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in the United States; 106 for breast cancer, which is expected to strike more than 180,000 American women each year; 103 for prostate cancer, which is expected to kill more than 28,000 American men each year; and 70 for colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer in both men and women in this country. Additional medicines target brain cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, ovarian cancer, pancreatic cancer, skin cancer, and others. In addition, companies are working on medicines to improve the quality of life for cancer patients.

Summing up the landscape, ASCO President Rickard L. Schilsky, M.D., was quoted as saying: “Scientifically, we have never been in a better position to advance cancer treatment. We now understand many of the cellular pathways that can lead to cancer. We have learned how to develop drugs that block these pathways. And increasingly, we know how to personalize therapy to the unique genetics of the tumor and the patient.”

As you will read in this month’s forum, developing cancer drugs is more risky and time-consuming than pursuing treatments for other diseases, except perhaps those for CNS, but then again “anything worth having is worth fighting for.”

Thanks to the companies and dedicated individuals who are willing to fight the good fight.

More than just hope