

SASCRO Statement on the use of Next Generation Photodynamic Therapy

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) refers to the administration to patients, of a drug (called a photosensitiser). The drug may be given orally or intravenously. When the patient is then exposed to light of a specific wavelength, free radicals are formed that damage cells containing the drug. The light sources are either applied directly, or via endoscopic or interstitial implants.

PDT is effective only against superficial tumours as light cannot penetrate tissues deeply. PDT may be considered for use in superficial non-melanoma cancers of the skin as well as in superficial cancers of the oesophagus, female genital tract and lungs. For non-skin tumours, the drug is usually administered intravenously, and the light must be administered via endoscopic means. The use of PDT should be considered in consultation with a specialist physician and Oncologist who is familiar with all of the possible available treatment options.

There are commercial Institutions promoting so-called Next Generation Photodynamic Therapy (NGPDT). They claim to be able to effectively treat patients with widespread metastatic disease using oral PDT and external application of a light source. Such claims are not supported by scientific evidence – nor would they be expected to be effective.

SASCRO is opposed to the use of this technique in this patient population who are understandably vulnerable to unfounded claims of effective treatment.

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