Oncology Issues

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New Products

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SOFTWARE INTEGRATES ONCOLOGY INFORMATION

Varian Medical Systems, Inc., of Palo Alto, Calif., has developed VARiS®/Vision™, a complete oncology information system for improving cancer patient care while streamlining clinic efficiency and reducing costs. VARiS®/Vision integrates patient information, treatment data and images on a common Windows® platform, and makes this information available to physicians, therapists, and administrators anywhere in the radiotherapy department.

From initial referral through post-treatment follow-up, VARiS/Vision will guide the patient through a radiotherapy department, while automatically acquiring the data and images needed for treatment planning, delivery and verification.

In other Varian products, the FDA has granted 510(k) clearance for CadPlan™ Plus V6, Varian Medical Systems' upgraded software system for planning advanced cancer radiotherapy treatments. CadPlan Plus is a comprehensive planning system for the complete range of radiotherapy treatments, including state-of-the-art high-resolution intensity modulated radiotherapy (IMRT).

CadPlan Plus produces a plan that is used by the sophisticated medical linear accelerators or brachytherapy systems used to treat tumors with external X-ray beams or with a radioactive "seed" implanted directly into the tumor within the body. The software system produces treatment plans developed with the use of 3-D diagnostic data sets and advanced tools for the optimization of beam placement, dose calculation, and quantitative plan review. It is a tool for planning conformal treatments where the radiation beam is precisely sculpted to the tumor size, shape, and location while minimizing dose to surrounding healthy tissue.

CadPlan Plus enhances the treatment capabilities of Varian's integrated Generation 6 radiotherapy platform. The CadPlan Plus software capabilities include its link with Varian's new Helios™ inverse planning tool, its support for the MLC-120 dynamic multileaf collimator for high-resolution IMRT, and its improved graphics.

Additional information is available at www.varian.com or by calling 800-544-4636.

DEVICE BEING DEVELOPED TO DETECT BREAST CANCER

Advanced Research Technologies, Inc., (ART) has signed an agreement with Massachusetts General Hospital, a teaching hospital affiliated with Harvard Medical School, to participate in the development of a laser-based optical detection system for breast cancer. Under the three-year agreement, the collaborators intend to develop a relatively inexpensive device that will complement existing systems used to diagnose breast cancer. The device will be designed to provide a better lesion detection rate among women undergoing routine mammography. The agreement also gives ART the right to obtain an option to market such a device under conditions determined between Massachusetts General Hospital and ART.

IMRT INVERSE PLANNING SOFTWARE CLEARS FDA

Nucletron BV has received FDA clearance to begin marketing its new Inverse Treatment Planning software on the PLATO radiotherapy treatment planning system. Nucletron's PLATO ITP software provides a fast inverse planning system that is integrated into a fully featured, three-dimensional planning system. PLATOcomplete™ becomes Nucletron's most complete treatment planning system.

Inverse treatment planning is the essential first step in being able to deliver intensity modulation radiation therapy (IMRT) with modern medical linear accelerators, and is designed to optimize radiation delivered to a tumor while minimizing the potentially harmful radiation absorbed by healthy organs.

With Nucletron's PLATO ITP inverse planning software, the radiation oncologist defines the dose to be given to the tumor as well as the allowable doses to surrounding healthy organs. The software then calculates the required radiation beam intensity required to deliver an optimized radiation dose distribution in the patient. The resulting treatment plan is then directly downloaded to any of the treatment delivery systems now capable of IMRT with multi-leaf collimators.

PLATO ITP can alternatively calculate the thickness of custom-made filters, known as compensators, that also "modulate" the beam intensity. This feature permits the advanced IMRT treatments to be given using conventional treatment machines that are much more commonly used in radiation therapy departments.

Based on an established algorithm by Thomas Bortfeld of the German Cancer Research Center, DKFZ, in Heidelberg, PLATO ITP has been designed in collaboration with major cancer treatment centers in the U.S. and Europe. The interaction between the radiation oncologist and the software has been carefully tailored to give the user advanced controls of the dose distribution to be achieved, and the speed of the optimization allows the results to be available in minutes.

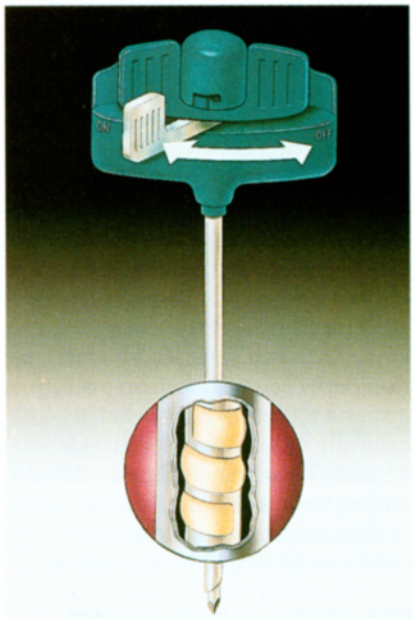
FDA APPROVES NEW BONE MARROW BIOPSY NEEDLE

Ranfac Corporation of Avon, Mass., a worldwide provider of

precision medical instruments, has introduced the latest innovation in bone marrow biopsy technology. The Goldenberg SNARECOIL™ bone marrow biopsy needle is the first of its kind, FDA-approved needle, which has an internal specimen capturing device that reliably delivers clean, intact biopsy cores.

The needle design incorporates a patented snarecoil, located at the needle tip, which winds around and captures long, nonfragmented specimens. The coil grabs the tissue specimen, severs it, and retains it safely within the needle as it is withdrawn. This action, actuated by a lever in the instrument's handle, eliminates the need to twist or manipulate the needle to obtain a specimen and simplifies the biopsy procedure.

This biopsy needle design was developed by Alec Goldenberg, M.D., director, Hematology Clinic, Bellevue Hospital Center, New York.



Ranfac Corp.'s new bone marrow biopsy needle

For more information, contact Ranfac Corp. at 1-800-272-6322 (toll free); or e-mail: ranfac@aol.com.

NEW ULTRASOUND SYSTEM TO BENEFIT CLINICIANS

Siemens Medical Systems, Inc., Ultrasound Group has started marketing its SONOLINE® Omnia, a high-performance, multi-specialty ultrasound platform that allows physicians to take advantage of the latest innovations in ultrasound technology usually found only on research-oriented systems.

The innovations extended to the SONOLINE Omnia include black and white SieScape™ Panoramic Imaging which will be available on all transducers, and Ensemble™ Tissue Harmonic Imaging (THI). Ensemble THI significantly enhances grayscale contrast resolution, especially in difficult-to-scan patients. SieScape, introduced in 1996, enables clinicians to instantly acquire images up to 60 centimeters in length. Recent studies are finding this panoramic imaging technology enhances diagnoses in a wide variety of scanning situations.

The SONOLINE Omnia is specifically designed to be the most mobile system in its class. Its lighter weight (approximately 145 kg.) and small footprint will help to speed workflow in busy hospital and clinical settings. Because of its mobility, it may serve as an integral part of an emergency room or could easily move into the confined space of a neonatal intensive care unit. The internal MO Drive provides storage and fast image retrieval for mobile exams. The SONOLINE Omnia also has an intuitive user interface making the system easy to learn and the ergonomics allow for convenient and efficient use.

For more information, contact Eric Wiegers for Siemens Medical Systems, Inc., at 206-448-1200; e-mail: ericw@wileyco.com.

PHARMACEUTICAL UPDATE

- Pending final review of additional data, ODAC unanimously recommended approval of Bristol-Myers Squibb tegafur/uracil (UFT® capsules in combination with leucovorin (Orzel™) for first-line treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer. Two randomized phase III trials have demonstrated equivalent survival for Orzel-treated patients when compared to patients treated with IV 5-fluorouracil/leucovorin.
- Pharmacia and Upjohn's epirubicin hydrochloride (Ellence™) was approved by the FDA for adjuvant therapy of node-positive breast cancer. The combination of Ellence, cyclophosphamide, and fluorouracil has been shown to reduce the relative risk of recurrence by 24 percent and the relative risk of death by 20 percent when compared to CMF.
- New off-label indications reported by the United States Pharmacopeia include 1) prostate and head and neck cancers for docetaxel; and 2) breast and ovarian cancers for gemcitabine. New off-label indications reported by the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists, Inc., include 1) cervical cancer for carboplatin, irinotecan, paclitaxel, and vinorelbine; and 2) colorectal cancer for capecitabine.
- ODAC has recommended approval for docetaxel for second-line use in the management of locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer.