



In the News

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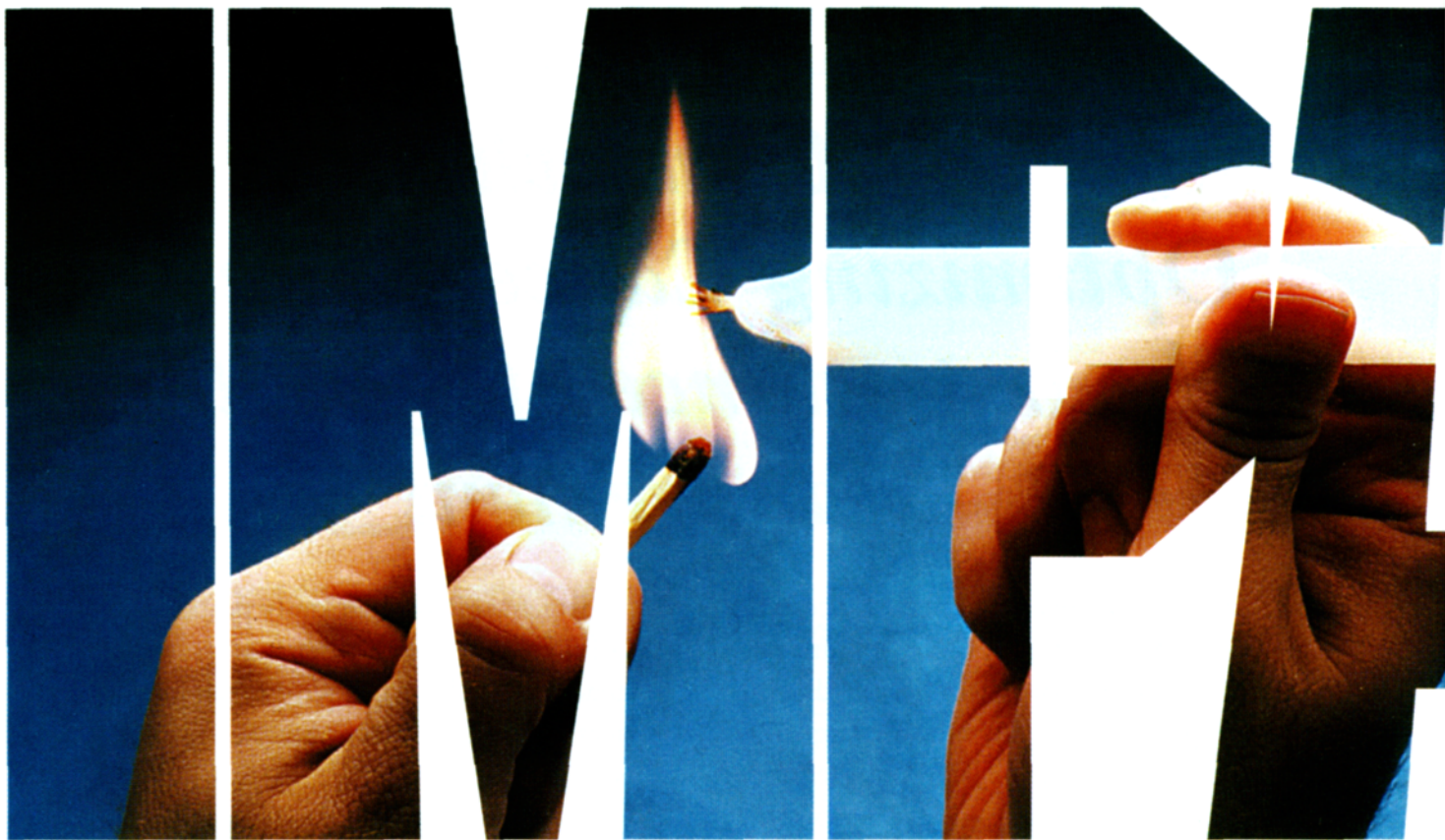
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IN THE NEWS

IOM AND ASCO SEPARATELY STUDY QUALITY OF CARE

Over the next two years, the issue of the delivery of quality cancer care will receive a great deal of attention. A recent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) indicated that 44,000 people die annually due to medical errors. How should oncologists address this issue?

In April 1999, the National Cancer Policy Board, an IOM member, released a report entitled *Ensuring Quality Cancer Care*. This is probably the first attempt by a major organization to look at this issue, although the report falls short in its methodology and leaves many questions still unanswered. That was the conclusion of Albert Einstein, Jr., M.D., F.A.C.P., medical director of the Swedish Cancer Institute, Seattle, Wash., who spoke at the February 2000 ACCC Oncology Presidents' Retreat.

The IOM report, which called for improved information about

the quality of cancer care nationwide, recommended that guidelines should be adopted and used and a quality benchmark data base be established. Einstein maintained that a new national agenda for quality care should be developed, focusing on a common definition of quality cancer care and quality outcomes.

In response to the IOM study, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) has launched the first study to develop a national monitoring system for cancer care in the U.S. Harvard University and the Rand Corporation agreed to implement the study.

The 18-month pilot study, which began in February 2000, will assess the feasibility of a national cancer care monitoring system and develop a prototype for such a system by initially examining the quality of care received by a sample group of adult breast and colorectal cancer patients. A panel of ASCO

physicians and other health experts will oversee the study, which will be conducted by researchers at Harvard and the RAND Corporation.

No national system currently exists to monitor the quality of cancer treatment, said ASCO President Joseph S. Bailes, M.D., F.A.C.P., who also spoke at the ACCC meeting. "This study will provide the groundwork and the strategy to develop a national system that is urgently needed and help the cancer community ensure that patients nationwide receive the highest standard of care," he said.

Harvard and RAND researchers will review patient medical records, identified using the National Cancer Data Base, to better understand the level of care given to each patient, including the type of treatment provided and the kind of follow-up care received. In addition, researchers will administer patient surveys to help understand

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patients' experiences, the type of care received, where that care was received, insurance status, and other information. This large-scale, direct interaction with patients to gather their perspectives on quality in a systematic way is an important component of the study. All patient information will be strictly confidential.

BREAST CANCER IS FOCUS OF FALL NIH CONFERENCE

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will hold its Consensus Development Conference on Adjuvant Therapy for Breast Cancer, Nov. 1-3, 2000, in Bethesda, Md.

Conference participants will consider new information on chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and other aspects of treatment that has emerged in recent years. Like other NIH consensus conferences, the meeting will culminate in recommendations for clinical practice.

"A substantial amount of new data has become available since the last consensus conference in 1990," said Jeff Abrams, M.D., of the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program. He pointed out that studies in the last decade have raised issues that need to be factored into treatment decisions.

During the conference, a panel of experts from outside NIH will hear presentations from leading researchers and then consider questions on specific topics such as the selection of chemotherapy, radiation, and hormonal therapy. The agenda will also include the clinical use of prognostic markers and quality-of-life issues. The conference will cover both node-negative and node-positive breast cancer.

For more information, visit the NIH web site at <http://odp.od.nih.gov/consensus> or call 301-592-3320.

ACCC LAUNCHES USP DI ONCOLOGY DRUG INFORMATION ONLINE

The Association of Community Cancer Centers is pleased to offer online the USP DI Oncology Drug Information. This in-depth online resource provides information on new cancer therapeutic and supportive care drugs and updates on many new indications for previously approved drugs. Two versions are available: one for cancer care professionals, and another for patients and their families. Aventis Oncology and Eli Lilly and Company are helping to sponsor this important service.

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