Best of ASH rehASH

By Ruben Mesa, MD

Perhaps you've enjoyed Olympic Park, the Georgia Aquarium, the spectacular weather, that great Thai restaurant in Midtown, or catching up with old friends. Maybe you've forged a promising new collaborative partnership, learned new ways to treat refractory ITP, or improved your understanding of coagulation biology. In the hectic, whirlwind experience that is the ASH annual meeting, we all have different experiences and take away different memories. As we've all come to realize, the meeting has much more going on than we could ever hope to capture during our brief visit to Atlanta. Between the Friday Satellite Symposia, a litany of education and scientific sessions, three poster sessions with thousands of posters, and an abundance of simultaneous sessions, it can be extraordinarily difficult to get a comprehensive sense of all the important discoveries reported and topics discussed at this meeting. I know that even if I were to attend only sessions directly relevant to my area of interest, myeloproliferative disorders, I would still have a full and exhausting agenda.

So, how can you "crystallize" the ASH meeting experience and be sure you didn't miss a really big breakthrough or discovery that may change how you treat patients? This year, ASH has created a new session, titled "Best of the ASH Annual Meeting: Clinical Translation – 2007 and Beyond," to provide a broad overview of the key scientific developments and educational highlights presented during the annual meeting, from a clinical perspective. This session aims to do more than just focus on the plenary, newsworthy, or late-breaking abstract session, but will also focus on the key innovations and research themes highlighted in this year's meeting.

Jane N. Winter, MD, and Kenneth S. Zuckerman, MD, will co-chair the 2007 Best of ASH session and highlight some of the key innovations and clinical results presented at this year's meeting. Subsequently, Ari M. Melnick, MD, and Mitchell Weiss, MD, PhD, will present an overview of the key scientific developments of the annual meeting with a focus on the clinical translation of the cutting-edge topics.

Dr. Weiss will be discussing the topic of microRNAs, which are a relatively recently discovered class of very small RNAs (about 22 bp) that regulate gene expression and participate in normal tissue development and disease. He will review the history and biology of microRNAs, discuss some key abstracts that were presented at the meeting on this topic, and speculate on how microRNAs might be used in the future as diagnostic and therapeutic tools. Dr. Melnick will discuss the importance and biological basis for inter-individual variation between patients, and highlight some of the most exciting research presented at the meeting on this topic. He will emphasize the role of genomics and epigenomics in making sense of the complexity of these diseases and identifying patient cohorts amenable to targeted therapeutics. The discussion will focus on translational studies with potential to impact clinical decision-making. Don't miss this newest addition to the annual meeting program schedule. The session will be held today in the Sidney Marcus Auditorium at 12:00 noon.