

## Editorial

# SBT Becomes the iSBTc: The State of the Society - 2003

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Biologic therapy of cancer has come of age. Treatments now available for our patients do not include only surgical excision, or agents that eliminate rapidly dividing cells, radiation and chemotherapy, but have expanded to include biological therapeutics. Along with a far better understanding of tumor biology and molecular abnormalities that lead to uncontrolled growth has come a parallel increase in the understanding of the interaction of the tumor with the host (tumor immunology) and its microenvironment (stromagenesis, angiogenesis.) This dynamic has fostered efforts to inhibit tumor growth by enhancing immune recognition and destruction (immunotherapy) and inhibiting stromal factors critical for tumor survival (anti-angiogenic therapy, etc.) With these therapies has come the recognition of the need for identification of biomarkers to assess their impact. These include the validation of biomarkers that serve as surrogates for treatment potency as well as clinically important endpoints including mechanism of action, tumor regression, survival, and toxicity, what we have recently termed *cancer biometrics*. Increasingly, the Society for Biological Therapy (SBT) has become the organization where these ideas are fostered and evaluated critically. The Society's annual meeting is also the forum where basic and clinical investigators from academic, regulatory, and biopharmaceutical venues discuss their common interests. The fact that these ideas and the related investigations do not conform to geographic boundaries and the Society's fine focus on cancer has recently prompted the SBT to recast itself as the iSBTc, the International Society for the Biological Therapy of Cancer.

With this name change has come an expanded and more vital mission. We have striven to have a more international presence, most recently through our association with the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies (FOCiS). Immediately preceding the Annual FOCiS Meeting in Paris, the iSBTc will sponsor a Satellite Symposium on Tumor Immunology on May 15th and,

with the International Cytokine and Interferon Societies, will co-sponsor a session on enhancing immunity at the FOCiS Meeting to be held in Montreal in July 2004.

In the past the SBT was content to engage its membership through annual meetings; the new iSBTc has more recently chosen to employ the expertise of its membership to sponsor Primers on Tumor Immunology and several Workshops. For example, the SBT has coupled with the NCI and FDA to organize Workshops on Immune Monitoring and on Angiogenesis Monitoring to assess the current status of these fields and establish guidelines for their application investigation in preclinical and cancer biometrics clinical trials. In addition, future workshops are planned in the new field of oncometrics, which applies various proteomic, imaging, cytometric, and genomic techniques to blood and tissue to identify biomarkers and surrogates of cancer dynamics and response to therapy. These tools will aid cancer researchers in developing and applying specific treatment approaches to molecularly defined targets and assessing their impact. The iSBTc also has plans to hold Consensus Conferences and to develop position papers on issues relevant to the Society membership. One such conference, on individualized therapy, is planned to immediately follow the 2003 Annual Meeting to be held this fall in Bethesda.

In concert with this expanded mission, have come closer ties with the *Journal of Immunotherapy*. The reports of the Immune Monitoring and Angiogenesis Workshops have been or will be published in the Journal and we intend to rapidly advance findings from the Cancer Biometrics and other Workshops here as well. In addition, position papers stemming from Consensus Conferences will be published in the Journal, as will supplements on areas and conferences of particular interest to the membership. Beginning this year, the Journal Editorial Board has been reshaped to better reflect Society membership and strong consideration has been

given to changing the Journal name to reflect the broader interests of the Society. This tighter association has been fueled in part by the agreement between the iSBTc and the Journal to include a subscription with paid iSBTc membership.

Increasingly, cancer is viewed as a series of genetic mutations—often arising in the setting of factors that promote chronic inflammation (cigarette smoke, chronic viral or bacterial infections, acid reflux, episodic ultraviolet radiation, etc.) and genomic instability. It is kept in check by biological defense mechanisms until the aggregate mutations and associated immune suppression enable the clonal progeny to expand and become a recognizable tumor. Tolstoy wrote, in *Anna Karenina*, “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” So too the myriad manifestations of cancer need to be scrutinized in the individual patient to allow identification not only of their commonalities, but also their differences. The modern nosology of cancer will identify not only the tissue from which it has arisen and the genetic alterations associated with growth, but also the means by which it escapes immune detection. We will design and employ therapies that target these

changes and develop and utilize tools that enable us to more readily monitor the effects of this therapy during tumor progression.

In 2003, the iSBTc is poised to play a pivotal role in this process and, through its close association with the *Journal of Immunotherapy*, is now better able to disseminate findings from these efforts. As President of the iSBTc, I encourage you to be a part of this process by becoming an active member of the iSBTc, attending and presenting your work at the annual meeting, participating in the Workshops and Consensus Conferences, and publishing your findings in the *Journal of Immunotherapy*.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank past Society Presidents Michael Lotze, who contributed greatly to the notions expressed herein, and Robert Dillman, whose steady leadership over the past two years has positioned the Society to take on a larger mission, Journal Editor Steven Rosenberg for his willingness to accommodate and foster a stronger relationship between the Society and the Journal, and Tara Withington and her colleagues at the Society’s headquarters, without whose administrative support the expanded activities of the Society could not have been possible.