Targeted therapy in head and neck cancer

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. This review focuses on recent advances in understanding the molecular mechanisms at the basis of cancer initiation and progression in the head and neck and also discusses the possible development of targeted cellular strategies. Intrinsic and acquired resistance of cancer cells to current conventional treatments, as well as recurrence, represent a major challenge in treating and curing the most aggressive and metastatic tumors also in the head and neck. Even though in some hematologic malignancies (i.e., non-Hodgkin’s lymphomas) antibodies specifically designed to target tumor-specific cells have already been introduced, in solid tumors molecular targeted therapy is now entering clinical practice.


Results and conclusions. Molecular targeting could achieve specific damage to cancer cells, at the same time preserving functionally important tissues. This could offer new perspectives in primary and adjuvant treatment also of head and neck tumors.

Key words: cancer stem cells, cancer treatment, head and neck cancer, targeting therapy.

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