Professor Jean-Charles Soria granted award for pioneering role in cancer drug development

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The TAT 2018 Honorary Award for cancer drug development has been granted to Professor Jean-Charles Soria, for his pioneering role in cancer drug development across molecular targeted agents, precision medicine, and immunotherapy. The award will be presented during the International Congress on Targeted Anticancer Therapies (TAT) 2018, to be held in Paris, France, 5-7 March.

The TAT Honorary Award was established in the early 1990s to acknowledge distinguished cancer drug development experts who have devoted a major part of their careers to the discovery and development of better anticancer medicines.

Over the past 15 years, Soria has pushed forward the molecular enrichment of patient populations in early clinical trials. This has increased response rates and been a key factor in the successful development of a number of drugs, including osimertinib for lung cancer. He has launched large precision medicine trials in both early drug development and lung cancer.

In the immunotherapy field, Soria has contributed to first-in-man trials of atezolizumab and pembrolizumab, which have changed the treatment of cancer. He was deeply committed to obtaining paired tumour biopsies for a better understanding of the mechanism of action of anti PD(L)1 antibodies. He has promoted awareness of the unique toxicity profile of immunotherapies which can exhibit late side effects of a
Soria was Editor-in-Chief of ESMO’s flagship scientific journal *Annals of Oncology* from 2014 to 2017. Under his leadership the journal reached an impact factor of 11.588, demonstrating his commitment to educating doctors and promoting new discoveries in cancer treatment and strengthening ESMO’s position as the driver of “Good science. Better medicine. Best practice.”

Soria said: “I am extremely happy to receive this award at a time when ESMO is taking over the organization of the TAT Congress, which is ‘the home of phase I oncology’. ESMO will provide this unique meeting the opportunity to grow and motivate more clinicians and scientists to understand and become passionate about drug development.”

In his TAT 2018 Honorary Award Keynote Address, Soria will outline how the drug development paradigm has changed over the past ten years. He said: “We have evolved from a classical drug development paradigm, which was a sequence of phase I, II, and III trials, to a situation where we now distinguish early drug development, encompassing phase I/II trials of registrational value and hundreds of patients, and late drug development, which is mainly phase III trials.”

In early drug development, the focus is no longer on just safety/toxicity but also activity and biomarkers of response, and early drug development trials include a much bigger number of patients (up to a thousand). “The registration value of phase I trials, which was null before, is real and can lead to breakthrough designation and conditional approval,” he said. “This change in paradigm has accelerated the development of new anticancer treatment for the benefit of cancer patients.”

The reasons underlining this transition include the advent of precision medicine and use of molecular targeted agents in selected populations. This approach has led to trial
enrichment and increased response rates, which regulators consider a potential outcome for registration. The advent of immunostimulatory antibodies has also fostered a completely new type of early drug development trials with implementation of large organ-specific parallel expansion cohorts.

Soria said: “This new paradigm creates a number of opportunities and challenges. Optimising drug development for immunotherapies, targeted agents and modern chemotherapies is key, especially when accounting for the clear need to combine them for cancer control.” Finally, Soria said: “This is a strong recognition of a 15-year expanse in my career focusing on bringing new medicines to clinical practice for the benefit of cancer patients. It is emotionally an important award to me because early drug development is an area with few accolades. And therefore, to receive the TAT 2018 Honorary Award, reflects a stringent selection process.”

Source: