

Transcript Details

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Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium: What It Is & What to Expect in 2019

Dr. Birnholz:

I'm Dr. Matt Birnholz. On this episode, recorded live at the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium in Chicago, we hear from Symposium Chair Dr. William Gradishar, Chief of Hematology and Oncology in the Department of Medicine at the Feinberg School of Medicine of Northwestern University.

Dr. Gradishar shares some key highlights and updates presented at this year's conference. Let's hear from him now.

Dr. Gradishar:

Just as a background, the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium has been going on for 21 years, and we've generally focused on providing practitioners—and that is people who actually take care of the patients with breast cancer—the most up-to-date information on how to manage patients, or new science that's coming out, so it's a collection of faculty that represent all the specialties, whether it's surgery, radiation oncology, medical oncology, genetics, who come and provide an up-to-date overview of whatever their topic is. And most of the speakers are well-recognized, not only in the US but internationally as well.

My specific role is I oversee the meeting. And I started the meeting 21 years ago. I think the areas that people are most interested in today include newer forms of systemic therapy, like immune therapy, and we have speakers that are going to be talking about that. We have newer antihormone therapy strategies where we combine antihormone therapy with newer targeted therapies, and we have several talks about that. We have new strategies for employing radiation therapy and looking at different schedules of administering radiation therapy and hopefully as a result equaling the benefit but decreasing both side effects and improving tolerability of the treatment. And we will have the surgeons talking about a number of different trials.

They still have a significant interest in trying to optimize management of the armpit, and that sounds sort of crude when you spit it out like that, but the idea is that we have evolved away from doing big, big surgeries, whether it was mastectomies going to lumpectomies. Similarly, we've evolved away from taking all the lymph nodes out from the armpit, and now we very selectively target or sample lymph nodes. And one of the consequences of that is that you have a much better tolerability for the patient because they have a lower risk of lymphedema. And we've learned that we gain probably exactly the same information by doing less.

And then, finally, I think the whole arena of looking at molecular analysis of tumors rather than simply the size or the number of lymph nodes has allowed us to look at the behavior of the disease at a much more molecular level, and one of the offshoots of that, of course, is that now we've developed targeted therapies for the abnormalities observed in patients.

So we'll be sort of bringing everybody up-to-date on whether it's surgery, radiation oncology, or some of the newer therapies that we're utilizing in the clinic, and hopefully these things will translate into better patient care around the country because our audience comes from all over.

Dr. Birnholz:

That was Dr. William Gradishar, Chair of the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium of Northwestern University, talking about the latest research and treatment updates highlighted at this year's conference. To revisit any part of this discussion and to access other episodes in this series, visit ReachMD.com/Advances-in-Women's-Health. I'm Dr. Matt Birnholz, and thank you for listening to ReachMD. Be Part of the Knowledge.