Cancer Cachexia: Can New Knowledge About Its Biology Yield Clinical and Commercial Value?

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Abstract

Introduction

When cachexia presents, prognosis is poor; that is true in patients with any of several diseases, including cancer. Cachexia affects 80% of patients with advanced cancer and is reported to be responsible for at least 20% of cancer deaths. But it is widely believed that cachexia is a sign that the patient’s metabolism has undergone a profound and irreversible change that means death is inevitable. The condition is poorly understood and treated largely with palliative approaches. However, new, early research into the mechanisms of cachexia is raising the possibility that better treatments can be developed and deployed as part of a multi-target cancer therapy paradigm.

Questions Answered in This Report

- Only recently has a consensus definition of cancer cachexia been established. How is the condition described, diagnosed, and treated? What is the size of the patient population in the major markets in 2008? In 2018? What is the prevalence in each of six primary tumor sites?
- Early research suggests that a variety of drug mechanisms could have utility in treating cachexia. What companies/academic institutions are exploring cachexia? Which agents approved for other indications might have a role in treating cachexia? What novel targets are being assessed?
- We speculate that the poorly understood mechanisms of cachexia might harbor the potential to improve the performance of other anticancer drugs. What is the early-stage evidence for this premise? How could anticachexia drugs fit into a multi-target treatment approach? What other strategies could companies in or entering this marketplace use?
Scope

- **Overview of cancer cachexia**: Disease definition, course, diagnosis.

- **Decision Resources epidemiology**: Total prevalent number of cancer cachexia cases associated with all advanced solid tumors in the major pharmaceutical markets (United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Japan) over 2008-2018; total prevalent number of cancer cachexia cases associated with six primary tumor sites; prevalence rate for six primary tumor sites.

- **Current treatment approaches**: Treating physicians, progestogens, corticosteroids.

- **Investigational approaches**: Amino acids, beta blockers, cannabinoids, COX-2 inhibition, dermacidin gene, ghrelin, IL-6 antagonism, inflammation, kanglaite, melanocortin antagonism, myostatin inhibition, olanzapine, proteolysis induction, selective androgen receptor modulation, thalidomide.

- **Opportunities in cancer cachexia**: Biomarkers, estimated market potential, multi-targeted therapy approaches, other forms of cachexia, improving survival.

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- Amgen
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- Daiichi Sankyo
- Eli Lilly
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