

## Targeted therapy in head and neck cancer

Chiara Bianchini<sup>1</sup>, Andrea Ciorba<sup>1</sup>, Stefano Pelucchi<sup>1</sup>, Roberta Piva<sup>2</sup>,  
and Antonio Pastore<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ENT Department, University Hospital of Ferrara, Ferrara; <sup>2</sup>Molecular Biology Section, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Ferrara, Ferrara, Italy

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### ABSTRACT

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**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.

**Methods.** A PubMed database systematic review.

**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.

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

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**Correspondence to:** Chiara Bianchini, MD, ENT Department, University Hospital of Ferrara, C.so Giovecca 203, 44100 Ferrara, Italy.  
Tel +39-0532-236383;  
fax +39-0532-237615;  
e-mail chiara.bianchini@unife.it

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