2025 Highlights and Future Directions in Neuroendocrine Cancer: An Interview with Dr. Jennifer Chan at the 2025 INCA Summit

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Lisa Yen 00:00
I'm Lisa Yen, Director of Programs and Outreach for the Neuroendocrine Cancer Foundation. And I'm here in Sofia, Bulgaria with Dr Jennifer Chan where we're here attending the International Neuroendocrine Cancer Alliance Summit [INCA]. Dr Chan is the current president of **NANETS**, the North American Neuroendocrine Tumor Society, and a neuroendocrine cancer expert and medical oncologist from Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. Dr Chan, tell us a little bit about what brings you here.

Dr. Jennifer Chan 00:30
So, I have been here for the INCA Summit, and I've had the pleasure of interacting with advocates from all over the world to learn about the amazing work that's being done to raise awareness and to promote education to patients as well as to healthcare providers about neuroendocrine cancer. So, it's been a really great opportunity for me.

Lisa Yen 00:47
Wow. Well, so honored to have you here. And how long have you been involved in the neuroendocrine cancer field?

Dr. Jennifer Chan 00:53
So, I've been taking care of patients with neuroendocrine cancers for almost my entire career, so about 20 years, and it's been a really great journey. I've learned a lot about the disease and seeing how the field has evolved, particularly when it relates to the treatments that are available, even what we know from the basic science perspective about what's driving the growth of neuroendocrine tumors and especially how therapies have evolved over, particularly the last 15 years or so.

Lisa Yen 01:21
Yeah, so over 20 years is a long time. How would you say this field has changed?

Dr. Jennifer Chan 01:27
I think it has grown definitely, from a very limited number of physicians who are interested in the disease to now a growing community of physicians who are really dedicating their careers to neuroendocrine tumors and quite engaged in research and ultimately aiming to improve the outcomes of patients.

Lisa Yen 01:47
That's really encouraging. We spoke two years ago at the Congress called ESMO in 2023 when you presented some results, and again last year at the ESMO 2024 in Barcelona. And what would you say are some of the highlights of the past year since we last spoke, some of the advances that you've seen?

Dr. Jennifer Chan 02:08
Yeah, so 2025 has been a particularly exciting year, particularly when it comes to approvals of new treatments. So, as you mentioned, we spoke in 2023 and also in 2024 about the **CABINET trial**, which I was very privileged to be a part of. And this was a phase three trial conducted in the United States evaluating the efficacy of cabozantinib in patients with advanced pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors as well as extrapancreatic neuroendocrine tumors. And the **extrapancreatic tumor** are tumors that originate primarily in the GI tract, but also in the lung, unknown primary sites, and even rare primary sites like the thymus. The trial was done to include patients who had had at least one prior therapy, not including somatostatin analogs. And the results that we presented in 2024 show that Cabozantinib slows the growth of neuroendocrine tumors and also improves what we call progression free survival.

So, the results of the trial led to the approvals in the United States as well as in Europe for cabozantinib to treat both pancreatic as well as extrapancreatic neuroendocrine tumors. So now having more treatments available and accessible to patients, I think, is a great advance.

The other treatment advance, just the last few months, in the spring, in the United States was the approval of **belzutifan**. This is a **HIF-2alpha inhibitor** that was approved to treat advanced pheochromocytomas and paragangliomas.

So, it's really been quite remarkable to have newer drugs available, and I think provides a lot of encouragement and hope to us as providers, as well as to our patients that we're treating.

Lisa Yen 03:51
Yeah. Wow, that must be so rewarding for you, as a clinician-scientist who has dedicated decades of work to this field, to see your work come to fruition and even an FDA approval, and also to be able to bring hope to so many patients.

Dr. Jennifer Chan 04:10
Yeah, no, it's been really remarkable. I think from start to finish, and now to see it expand beyond the patients that we were including in the trial to across the US and now the world. That's a pretty amazing accomplishment.

Lisa Yen 04:24
And the two drugs that you're mentioning, it really covers a wide, a wide spread of neuroendocrine cancers, right? Not just the typical GI cancers, but also all across the board: lung, unknown primaries, as you said, all throughout the body. And then what you said, with belzutifan, with the rarer subset and neuroendocrine.

Dr. Jennifer Chan 04:45
Right, right. And I think, you know, what's also very encouraging is to see the newer trials that have recently completed, or the newer trials that are going to be enrolling in the future. I think it's a new class of agents. And I think again, as we do these trials and see the results, hopefully we'll have newer options available for all of the patients that we treat, the neuroendocrine tumors, the pheochromocytoma, paraganglioma, the extrapulmonary neuroendocrine carcinomas. So, I think there's a lot of excitement across the field.

Lisa Yen 05:16
Yeah. Wow, excitement for research, excitement to bring hope to patients.

So, in closing, what would you say is one thing you're most looking forward to in the next year?

Dr. Jennifer Chan 05:27
I think in the upcoming year, I'm looking forward to learning about the trials that have recently completed. You know, for instance, earlier in the year, we heard the results of the COMPETE trial that evaluated lutetium177 edotreotide, another form of PRRT, compared to everolimus, showing an advantage for PRRT. So, I think these trials help to inform the way we care for patients, and I think we'll find out more details from that trial. We also are hearing more about the results of the alpha-emitting PRRT agents, and I think those trials will continue to enroll patients, and we'll see those results. And I think, again, I think practice will change. I think because of the work that's being done right now.

Lisa Yen 06:11
Yeah. Practice changing work, and thank you for being part of it, and thank you for inspiring others.

Dr. Jennifer Chan 06:17
Thank you. Thanks for having me.