[Limitations and pitfalls of clinical studies in oncology]

Nowadays results of clinical studies in oncology are often first found and commented in the news media because of their high relevance to the pharmaceutical market. The limits and pitfalls of clinical studies are manifold and not always appreciated even by specialists as well as journalists and politicians. The planning of a study is a most crucial phase, and most deficits are due to inappropriate design and conduct of a study. Adequate and skilful interpretation of a study is often hampered by many known but mostly overlooked variable pitfalls. Today there is an overrepresentation of pharmaceutically sponsored studies and a painful lack of well-designed academic studies with really meaningful endpoints for patient care. This paper touches several important aspects of today’s shortcomings of clinical studies in oncology and highlights the importance of strengthening the academic clinical research. Evidence-based medicine needs to be more clinically relevant, and therefore we need well-designed, and critically interpreted studies in the future.