

The impact of ChART on the science of thymic malignancies

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Thymic malignancies qualify as an orphan disease. Many hurdles stand in the way of scientific advancement for such rare diseases, including the difficulty in having an adequate and homogeneous population of patients to study, and the fact that grants and other support for research is mostly unavailable for rare diseases (1). It is clear that the only way to make progress is through grass roots efforts, collaboration, and an organizational infrastructure. This realization led to the formation of both the International Thymic Malignancy Interest Group (ITMIG) and the Chinese Alliance for Research in Thymomas (ChART).

From the outset, ITMIG has supported the development of regional thymic groups such as ChART (2). While ITMIG provides infrastructure for global collaboration, there are many advantages to having strong regional groups working on the same issues. We all have a lot to learn from one another. There may be regional differences in risk factors, susceptibility, management and outcomes (3). The ability to address questions both regionally as well as globally is ideal to develop a full understanding of thymic malignancies.

ChART has been a major contributor to the science in thymic malignancies. ChART has led a number of investigations, both of ChART data as well as global ITMIG data that are shedding new light on management. The size of the database assembled by ChART is a major component of the available global data. The scope of ChART activities is broad—ranging from retrospective and prospective data, to clinical trials, and to efforts to set reasonable standards such as in the article by Professor Fang in this issue. The impact of these activities is just beginning, and clearly will be substantial.

Most impressive is the quality of the ChART activities. ChART is a role model for regional organization, for assembling high quality data, for attention to the scientific process and for thoughtful development of infrastructure. All of this has been accomplished in the span of only a few years. It is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and

attention to quality and science of the ChART members, and a great example of the contributions China is making to the global community in general.

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Footnote

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