

CLL – The New Era

G'day mates! I am once again reaching out to you from my home office as access to the hospital remains restricted due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While I dearly miss seeing my friends at work, no doubt like many of you, I am learning to make the most of my new-found free time. Brainstorming ideas with colleagues over FaceTime is not quite the same as in person over a cup of coffee, but it is still effective at stimulating my thought processes. These discussions have led me to conclude we are in a new era of CLL. Thanks to the remarkable advances in treatment that have occurred over the last 15 years, many of which CLL Global played a role in supporting, the majority of CLL patients today are living with low to no detectable minimal residual disease (MRD) and will remain that way for years and even decades. But as many of you know from personal experience that is far from the end of the story. There are still unmet needs in CLL and my focus going forward will be to address these.

We need to understand, and in doing so overcome, drivers of resistance that can develop against small molecule inhibitors like ibrutinib and venetoclax. As the small molecule treatment landscape continues to grow there is a need to prioritize what treatments are most appropriate for which patients. We must address the immune dysfunction that exists in CLL patients, which can lead to increased rates of infections and second cancers. We need strategies to identify those patients most at risk of developing Richter's transformation, and effective treatment options for those who do. And most importantly we need to find a cure. Looking at our accomplishments over the last decade I am confident the next one will prove even more fruitful. Together, there is no stopping us!