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Mukherjee Assesses Cancer Progress and Challenges

Alexandria, VA (October 5, 2015) — The way we imagine cancer leads to how we treat cancer, Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee told the 98 attendees at ALDA's Fall Senior Management Conference earlier this week. Dr. Mukherjee further cautioned that the most important phase of understanding cancer physiology is still incomplete.

Dr. Mukherjee, author of the Pulitzer prize winning book, "The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer", was a featured speaker at the Conference which drew over 100 ALDA member executives.

In the past, cancer was considered to be a disease of abnormal cellular growth – something happened to a normal cell to convert it to a malignant or abnormal cell. The initial response was to cut out the cancerous cell, but it took 100 years to conclude that radical removal of cells had little effect on survival. Chemical therapies – the idea came from poison gas - then were tried, and by the 1980s we witnessed a significant decline in childhood leukemia survival due to a combination of multiple chemotherapies.

Dr. Mukherjee outlined several important trends:

- Not all cancers behave the same way – leading to the hypothesis that alterations in growth controlling genes cause cancer. The question is how many genes and how common are those genes?
- Seeing cancer as a genomic disease prompts us to look at targeted therapies – but how do you put all this together, and how do you know when to switch to another therapy.
- This leads to a new approach – the intersection of coordinated diagnostics and therapies.
- For a relatively small subset of cancers, we have seen cures. Where signals exist, we can find a source of the cancer like a beacon. Other cancers we will be able to make chronic, while others have no chance of cure. Another issue is how the treatment strategy changes with the age of the patient.
- The pathologist and diagnostics role is not up to the level of their importance, although in the past 10 years, the proportion of physicians engaging in monitoring has increased.

For more information regarding ALDA, contact Mike Duff, President, at 703-647-6214. More information regarding ALDA, its purposes, objectives and programs, and links to its members' websites can be found at www.thealda.org

Based on the Washington DC suburb of Alexandria, VA, ALDA is an industry trade association for companies that develop and supply life science, analytical and diagnostic products and services used to conduct research, drug discovery, QA/QC testing and diagnostics in a wide range of industries and applications. Major customer segments including pharmaceuticals, biotech, academic and government research, food safety and environmental testing, personalized medicine and diagnostics.

ALDA's Mission is to be an advocate for our industry and a valuable aid to our members' global business success and to their customers' advancement of healthcare, science and industrial innovation by providing meetings with strategic content, networking, global market and business intelligence, and insights on emerging technologies, markets and business strategies.