Promising New Immunotherapy for Melanoma, Kidney Cancer, and Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer

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A new immunotherapy (called BMS-936558) helped shrink melanoma, kidney cancer, and non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) in a recent early study. Immunotherapy is designed to boost the body's natural defenses to fight the cancer. It uses materials either made by the body or in a laboratory to bolster, target, or restore immune system function.

The 296 patients who participated in this study had different types of cancer, including melanoma, NSCLC, colorectal, prostate, and kidney cancer that had worsened while receiving the standard treatments. During treatment with this new immunotherapy, 28% (26 out of 94 patients) of patients with melanoma, 27% (9 out of 33 patients) of patients with kidney cancer, and 18% (14 out of 76 patients) of patients with NSCLC had the tumor shrink or stop growing.

When researchers examined the results of the study, they found a tumor marker (biomarker) called PD-L1 that could help predict whether this treatment would be effective. A tumor marker is a substance found at higher than normal levels in the blood, urine, or body tissues of some people with cancer. Researchers found that 36% (9 out of 25 patients) of patients with PD-L1 present in their cancer had the cancer shrink or stop growing, compared with none of the patients without PD-L1 present in the cancer.

What this means for patients

?It's exciting to see a single treatment work this well among patients with a range of cancers that had worsened despite standard therapies,? said Suzanne Topalian, MD, Professor of Surgery and Oncology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland. ?We were especially surprised to see it have an effect in nearly 20% of patients with lung cancer, which is historically difficult to treat with immunotherapy.? This immunotherapy is still in the early stages of development and only available in clinical trials. Talk with your doctor about all treatment options for your specific type of cancer, including clinical trials.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What type of cancer do I have?
- What is the stage? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- If the cancer worsens during treatment, what are the next steps?

For More Information

Guide to Kidney Cancer [1]

Guide to Lung Cancer [2]

Guide to Melanoma [3]

Understanding Tumor Markers [4]

Understanding Immunotherapy [5]

Clinical Trials [6]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Kidney+Cancer
[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Lung+Cancer
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Melanoma
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Tumor+Markers

[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Immunotherapy
[6] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Clinical+Trials