

New therapies harness power of the immune system against cancer

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New research on innovative immunotherapies for advanced or high-risk melanoma and cervical cancer were presented today at the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). These treatments – used alone or in combination – fight cancer by activating and amplifying the body's immune response to the disease.

The new studies find high activity with investigative drugs for advanced [melanoma](#), and show for the first time that ipilimumab, a [treatment](#) already approved for advanced melanoma, can substantially decrease the risk of melanoma recurrence in certain [patients](#) with earlier-stage disease. In addition, another small trial reports that a one-time, personalized immunotherapy treatment induces complete and long-lasting remissions in a small number of women with advanced [cervical cancer](#) – a disease with little to no effective treatment options.

"The field of immunotherapy has exploded in the last decade, and more and more patients are benefiting," said press briefing moderator Steven O'Day, MD, ASCO expert and clinical associate professor of medicine at the University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine.

"Having a potential new way to keep melanoma at bay is a major advance for patients who live under the constant fear of recurrence after surgery. It's also incredibly exciting that we're extending the benefits of immunotherapy beyond melanoma, to diseases like cervical cancer where patients urgently need better options."

Featured studies include:

- Adjuvant ipilimumab improves recurrence-free survival in patients with high-risk stage III melanoma: Study marks the first time adjuvant (post-surgery) ipilimumab is shown to be effective in earlier-stage melanoma, though side effects are considerable.
- PD-1 targeting immunotherapy MK-3475 has high and long-lasting activity against [metastatic melanoma](#): Large phase I trial finds high survival rates in patients with advanced melanoma, including those previously treated with ipilimumab; one-year survival rate is 69 percent across all patient subgroups.
- Combination immunotherapy with ipilimumab and nivolumab achieves long-term survival for patients with advanced melanoma: Updated follow-up data from an expanded phase I study show concurrent treatment with ipilimumab and the anti-PD-1 nivolumab yields strong, long-lasting responses and high [survival](#) rates.
- HPV-targeted adoptive T cell therapy may provide a new personalized strategy for advanced cervical cancer: Early study of HPV-targeted immunotherapy shows promising activity in metastatic cervical cancer, a hard-to-treat disease with few effective treatment options.

Provided by American Society of Clinical Oncology

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