

# ASCO: Pembrolizumab superior for initial Tx of advanced NSCLC

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(HealthDay)—For patients with programmed death ligand 1 (PD-

L1)-expressing locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC), pembrolizumab is associated with better overall survival than chemotherapy, regardless of the PD-L1 tumor proportion score (TPS), according to a study presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, held from June 1 to 5 in Chicago.

Gilberto Lopes, M.D., from the University of Miami Health System, and colleagues compared [pembrolizumab](#) with [platinum-based chemotherapy](#) at the lower TPS of  $\geq 1$  percent. A total of 1,274 [patients](#) with previously untreated advanced/metastatic NSCLC were randomized in a 1:1 ratio to  $\leq 35$  cycles of pembrolizumab or no more than six cycles of paclitaxel + carboplatin or pemetrexed + carboplatin with optional pemetrexed maintenance.

The researchers found that 13.7 and 4.9 percent of patients were still on pembrolizumab and were on pemetrexed maintenance, respectively, after a median follow-up of 12.8 months. In patients with TPS  $\geq 50$  percent, TPS  $\geq 20$  percent, and TPS  $\geq 1$  percent, pembrolizumab correlated with significant improvement in overall survival (hazard ratios, 0.69, 0.77, and 0.81, respectively). The frequency of grade 3 to 5 drug-related adverse events was reduced with pembrolizumab (17.8 versus 41.0 percent).

"Our study shows that pembrolizumab provides more benefit than chemotherapy for two-thirds of all people with the most common type of [lung cancer](#)," Lopes said in a statement.

Several authors disclosed financial ties to pharmaceutical companies, including Merck, which manufactures pembrolizumab and partially funded the study.

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