



Patient Education for Melanoma Skin Cancer

Major Advances in Uveal Melanoma

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TRANSCRIPT

I wanted to end the discussions about different types of melanoma with the kind of melanoma called uveal melanoma. Uveal melanoma is the kind of melanoma that arises from the back of the eye. And one of the challenges about uveal melanoma is that for a long time, these immune therapy drugs that I've been discussing with you did not recognize uveal melanoma as foreign. So uveal melanoma cells could continue to grow and divide, and it was not appreciated that the uveal melanoma cells were foreign to the body, so the standard immune therapy drugs like nivolumab pembrolizumab, ipilimumab, and relatlimab were ineffective for the most part in most patients with uveal melanoma, although a subgroup of people can have a nice benefit.

And one of the new ways of treating patients with uveal melanoma has come forward recently. And it helps bring T cells into the tumor microenvironment such that the immune response can be enhanced against uveal melanoma cells and then ultimately seek and destroy these uveal melanoma cells. This picture of uveal melanoma here on the left and in the back of somebody's eye.

But the way that that's done here is through a new drug that's gotten FDA approval called tebentafusp. And what happens with tebentafusp is that a special kind of antibody called bispecific antibody grabs the T cell with one hand and grabs a melanoma cell with another hand and it just brings the T cells close to the melanoma cell. So, it essentially is like a matchmaker: grabs the T cell, says, "Get over here to the melanoma and I want you to see this melanoma cell that shouldn't be here." And that's the way that uveal melanoma which traditionally hasn't been successfully treated with immune therapy drugs that we were discussing is now starting to be successfully treated with this drug called tebentafusp.

But only certain types of patients with uveal melanomas are candidates for that, and it depends on the HLA status of an individual patient's immune system. But it's very important if you have uveal melanoma that started in the back of the eye. As might be shown in this example picture on the left, this is the retina where the optic nerves exist in a big kind of black uveal melanoma that's present there. If that's the kind of melanoma you have, it's really important to make sure that you've done appropriate HLA typing to help determine if you're a candidate for this "matchmaker" type drug of tebentafusp to bring the T cells closer into the tumor microenvironment.



And this is the notice that the FDA approved tebentafusp earlier in 2022. The first time, actually, there was approval in advanced uveal melanoma. So, really, a great outcome for patients.