



2020 Target Therapy Forum

NTRK, BRAF, RET & MET Question and Answer Panel

The Importance of Broad Molecular Testing

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Dr. Justin Gainor – Director Cancer Center for Thoracic Cancers, Director of Targeted Immunotherapy Massachusetts General Hospital, Assistant Professor of Medicine Harvard Medical School

Dr. Jacob Sands: We've talked about the importance of widespread testing, as well as the fact that it's not being done everywhere and in the Boston area. I think we're pretty fortunate that the medical community here is in general, really good. And excellent training. How often though, do you see patients without the full testing? So you outlined some, some rare, some of the more rare mutations in lung cancer. How often do you ever see patients that come in, who are getting treated in other centers that come in and haven't had the full testing?

Dr. Justin Gainor: The short answer is yes. I mean, we still see it and, and you know, I think it's, it's you know, when I speak to you know, docs throughout the country, I, I think people know that genotyping needs to be performed. I think sometimes it comes down to some, either technical issues or practical issues. But I think that's really where, you know oncologist need to partner with, with other docs within their institutions, their pathologist, but also very much with patients and families, and emphasizing the importance of this. You know I think Dr. Sands touched on an important point, which was that, you know, we recognize when someone is newly diagnosed with cancer, that they wanted everyone, including the oncologist, they want to start treatment yesterday and get that we get the urgency. And you know, I think we need to do better at shortening the turnaround times for gene testing to help get people started faster. But I agree with Dr. Sands, it's you know, I'd rather, much rather start someone on the right treatment than the wrong treatment fast. But I think it then also means that you know,



it takes constantly checking in making sure that someone's still feeling okay, answering questions along the way while we're still waiting for those results.

Dr. Jacob Sands:

Yeah. And, you know, that urgency to start treatment is strong. And I think you're right. I mean, I've certainly seen cases where it was just felt like, well, it's unlikely that we'll find something, so then it's not done for the sake of expediency, but amongst those people, I certainly see some where we end up sending it off. And in fact, they do have an option and targeted therapies. And that is so meaningful, as we said, when there is a targeted therapy option that is usually the best treatment option for people. So just in a word of if it seems like it might be tough or there needs to be a biopsy done because the blood test didn't show it. Sometimes it's a matter of just going through it and just getting that done because that can demonstrate something. The other thing is that I have on people, oncologists that weren't aware of the option for blood testing which is pretty widespread at this point. So that's something I think most oncologists are aware of, but if the biopsy would be tough or if there's not enough tissue from prior, sending a blood test but in some cases, even if the blood test doesn't show it, getting a biopsy still ends up being important.