

Combination immune therapies succeed better in cancer treatment'

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San Diego, June 24, 2014: A new paradigm shift is taking place in the treatment of cancer. Physicians armed with latest immune therapies which are combined with the existed targeted treatment methods such as chemotherapy are delivering better results in cancer patients, according to experts.

The annual BIO convention kicked off on June 24 at San Diego, California, with a super session on "a new paradigm in oncology treatment" where the experts were unanimous that in the past decade, our understanding of cancer's disease mechanism, along with these new therapies are delivering better treatment outcome for patients.

"Now our ability to learn about the response to modern therapies from patient is better. At the same with the use of latest computer software techniques data analytics are helping us to understand the disease mechanism more clearly. It will surely lead to more robust design of medicines," said Dr Donald A DePinho, president, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and a leading oncologist.

Added Dr Peter Lebowitz, head of oncology at Janssen Research said, "Now we have multiple mechanisms to understand the disease and with some of the new biological medical products, the treatment of cancer is leading to more understanding of the disease at the micro-level. Hopefully these factors will lead to even better therapies in the future."

Cancer is the most targeted disease for developing products by the biotech industry. The US regulator FDA approved a record 13 anti-cancer drugs in 2013. Cancer drugs were more than half of the new drugs approved last year. Another factor advancing cancer care is the availability of quick diagnostic methods.

"With the latest diagnostic techniques, a tumor is analyzed and the results of the cancerous status is available to physicians within days. This is certainly helping to offer cure faster to patients," remarked Dr Jeff Allen, executive director, Friends of Cancer Research, a patient advocacy group.

"I never thought I will see the use of immune therapies which are combined with existing targeted therapies in my life time," said Dr Bahija Jallal, executive VP at MedImmune, a unit of AstraZeneca. "Thanks to these combinations some forms of cancer are no longer as dreaded as they used to be few decades ago."

The experts hotly debated some of the new treatment mechanism and ways to speed up development of cancer treatment drugs. One of the suggestion was to let scientists develop new clinical testing techniques which can predict success rate of trials. All the panelists agreed that today cancer drug research takes place in silos with researchers, clinicians and drug developers not sharing and analyzing huge amounts of data generated during the long process.

They noted that using the data analytics tools on the vast databases of data gathered from cancer patients in hospital could be used more efficiently using computer software and generate better understanding and redirection of clinical trials of anti-cancer drugs.