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Metastatic melanoma and immunotherapy

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Abstract

Harnessing the immune system to attack cancer cells has represented a holy grail for greater than 100 years. While prospects of tumor-selective durable immune based therapies have provided small clinical signals for many decades, recent years have demonstrated a virtual explosion in progress. Melanoma has led the field of cancers in which immunotherapy has produced major clinical inroads. The most significant and impactful immunotherapies for melanoma utilize immune checkpoint inhibition to stimulate T cell mediated tumor killing. The major targets of checkpoint blockade have thus far been CTLA4 and PD1, two key receptors for central and peripheral immune tolerance. This review discusses current understanding of how these checkpoint blockade therapeutics have led to major clinical responses in patients with advanced melanoma. It is likely that we are poised to see significantly greater anti-cancer immunotherapy efficacy, both in improving response rates and durability for melanoma, and for other less immunogenic malignancies.

Keywords: melanoma; immunotherapy; T cell; checkpoint; vitiligo

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