

# In the news

## FROM AACR 2016

In May 2016, the annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) was attended by ~20,000 cancer researchers. Other than the continued excitement over the development of immunotherapy for a variety of malignancies, which included the confirmed 5-year survival of 34% of patients with metastatic melanoma treated with nivolumab, much excitement surrounded several other major areas of investigation.

Drugs that target the epigenetic changes that occur throughout the natural history of cancer have been known for some time; however, AACR 2016 reported on new therapies targeting epigenetics — including a well-attended plenary session on bromodomain and extra-terminal motif (BET) inhibitors — and the role of epigenetics in drug resistance, including new trials of histone deacetylase inhibitors or DNA methyltransferase inhibitors, in combination with more conventional therapies, to reverse acquired resistance to anticancer agents. The growth of interest in patient-derived xenografts was another common theme; notably, several strategies originally identified using these models are now being tested in early phase clinical trials with results eagerly awaited.

Most researchers are concerned by the inflating costs of advanced cancer care that are rapidly becoming unaffordable to many; thus, following the US Affordable Care Act, this meeting saw considerable interest in alternative payment models, which might eventually address the issues of affordability, whilst also recognizing the need to invest in the development of new treatments.

None of the research presented at this meeting could be delivered without financial support; the AACR proudly announced the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative — the result of lobbying by the AACR and a series of meetings with senior US politicians — in a very well-attended closing ceremony featuring the US Vice President Joe Biden.

*Peter Sidaway*