

# In the news

## FROM AACR 2017

In April 2017, ~20,000 cancer researchers descended upon Washington DC for the annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). Perhaps fittingly, considering its location, many delegates expressed concern regarding recent political developments and the anticipated funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health research budget at a time when considerable progress is being made in cancer research. This progress was illustrated by reports at the meeting — including the notable 52% partial or complete response rate of patients with advanced-stage melanoma receiving anti-PD-1 antibodies in combination with the indoleamine 2,3-dioxygenase (IDO) inhibitor indoximod, without any notable change in frequency of adverse events compared with anti-PD-1 antibodies alone.

In addition, much enthusiasm was apparent for the emerging role of chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cells, with the first FDA approval of this type of therapy anticipated later this year: several presentations revealed progress in standardizing the approach to generating such therapies with the aim of minimizing the wide variations in both the outcomes and adverse effects seen across different studies. The importance of the microbiota, specifically how variations in the type and abundance of micro-organisms might dictate responses or resistance to anticancer therapies, also attracted considerable interest.

Several focused research initiatives were also announced, including the Stand Up To Cancer colorectal cancer 'Dream Team' initiative, designed to unite the leading experts in colorectal cancer and encourage greater collaboration. Of note, the early results obtained by several of these initiatives in other cancers, including pancreatic cancer, are imminent, and might provide some hope to patients with this largely untreatable form of cancer.

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