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Jedd Wolchok is interviewed by a news crew at the 50th annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in Chicago.

Summary

Our experts offer their perspective in major media outlets on recent research into drug- and cell-based immunotherapies for cancer.

Over the past several days, Memorial Sloan Kettering experts shared their perspectives with major media outlets about updated research on the success of drug-based immunotherapy for treating advanced [melanoma](#) and new findings revealing the potential of cell-based immunotherapy in treating

Memorial Sloan Kettering's Expertise in Cancer Immunotherapy Draws Media Focus at 2014 ASCO Meeting

advanced [cervical cancer](#).

In television and print interviews, they commented on several studies reported this past weekend at the 50th annual meeting of the [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#) (ASCO) – one of the largest educational and scientific events in the international oncology community.

Drug-Based Immunotherapy in Advanced Melanoma

New data out of ASCO shows that the effects of drug-based immunotherapy can sometimes last for years in patients who were treated for advanced melanoma.

[Jedd Wolchok](#), Chief of our Melanoma Service, was a coauthor on all three of the most [important melanoma studies](#) highlighted to media at the meeting

With immunotherapy, you're treating the patient, and the patient is treating the cancer.

Jedd Wolchok
Chief of our Melanoma Service

When discussing the clinical trials with [The Wall Street Journal](#), he commented, “This field has spent several decades figuring out better ways to treat the cancer, and very important accomplishments have been made. We now have a way to treat the patient as well. With immunotherapy, you’re treating the patient, and the patient is treating the cancer.”

“It’s a completely different world for patients with metastatic melanoma, to talk about the majority of patients being alive for years rather than weeks or months,” Dr. Wolchok added in an interview with the [New York Times](#).

And researchers are hopeful that melanoma is only the first cancer to be successfully treated as a result of research in this growing field. In fact, Memorial Sloan Kettering investigators presented early research that various drug-based immunotherapy agents appear safe and active in several other cancers, including [non-small cell lung cancer](#), [kidney cancer](#), [breast cancer](#), and [other solid tumors](#).

Dr. Wolchok told [Forbes.com](#) that the results presented this year reinforce “the idea that immunotherapy is not a treatment for just one or two diseases, it can be applied in numerous diseases.”

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Cell-Based Immunotherapy in Advanced Cervical Cancer

Another [new immunotherapy study](#) presented this year involved adoptive T cell therapy for advanced cervical cancer caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). Researchers at the [National Cancer Institute](#) took tumor samples from nine women with advanced cervical cancer and extracted T cells that target the HPV virus. They multiplied the T cells in the lab, and then injected billions of them back into the women. In one woman, the tumor shrank significantly; two of the women are now cancer-free.

Renier Brentjens, Director of Cellular Therapeutics at Memorial Sloan Kettering, [treats leukemia patients with genetically re-engineered T cells](#) and told [Reuters](#), “This is yet another example of a successful application of adoptive T cell immunotherapy, now in the realm of solid tumors, such as cervical cancers. We’re starting to see that T cells, if properly targeted, can eradicate incurable metastatic cancers.”

This report gives hope that there “may be a way to treat where standard chemotherapies have failed and maybe replace chemotherapies some day,” he added in an article published on [Forbes.com](#).

“This is building on new knowledge about how the immune system works. We now have several approaches that are showing these dramatic results,” [Michel Sadelain](#), Director of Memorial Sloan Kettering’s [Center for Cell Engineering](#), told Dr. Nancy Snyderman, NBC’s Chief Medical Editor, for a story on NBC Nightly News.

“Our T cells keep us alive every day. They protect us from invaders. Invaders could be viruses, bacteria, parasites, and we don’t realize that they play also a big role in fighting off cancer cells,” Dr. Sadelain explained further in a story on [NBCnews.com](#).

Memorial Sloan Kettering's Expertise in Cancer Immunotherapy Draws Media Focus at 2014 ASCO Meeting

"We can't call it a cure yet. We need time, but complete remission means complete disappearance of the tumor," he added in an interview with [WABC-TV](#).

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