

Vaccine advances for gastric, pancreatic, esophageal and colon cancer

Scientists at Thomas Jefferson University who are developing a cancer vaccine to prevent recurrences of gastric, pancreatic, esophageal, and colon cancers say they have added a component that would make the vaccine more effective. The change makes the vaccine less prone to being cleared by the immune system before it can generate immunity against the tumor components.

The preclinical studies pave the way for a Phase II clinical trial opening to patients this fall, according to Adam Snook, PhD, assistant professor in the department of pharmacology and experimental therapeutics and researcher at the NCI-Designated Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center (SKCC)—Jefferson Health.

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The Phase II trial aims to enroll 100 patients with gastric, pancreatic, esophageal, or colon cancers who have been treated with first-line therapy and are in remission. Eligible patients will have undergone standard first-line therapy, usually surgery and chemo or radiation therapy, with no evidence of disease.

“This cancer vaccine is really designed to help the body keep the cancer from coming back,” explained Babar Bashir, MD, assistant professor of medical oncology at Jefferson and a researcher with the SKCC, and clinical leader on the trial. “It’s not powered to remove large tumor burden. But recurrence is a major problem for each of these cancers, and being able to reduce the chance of recurrence can translate to major improvements in a patient’s longevity.”

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