

AWARD NUMBER: **W81XWH-20-1-0412**

TITLE: **A Combination Therapy Strategy to Reverse Anti-PD-1 Therapy Resistance in Metastatic Ovarian Cancer Patients**

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CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: **Georgetown University**

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14. ABSTRACT The purpose of this phase II clinical study is to investigate if administration of a vaccine (NY-ESO-179-108 peptide) before anti-PD-1 would be able to reverse the anti-PD-1 therapy resistance and increase the response in patients with platinum-resistant ovarian cancer (OC) and to correlate the presence of dysfunctional PD-1 ⁺ CD38 ^{hi} CD8 ⁺ T cells with the treatment outcome. We have developed the clinical protocol based on the grant proposal submitted to DoD and also prepared the Informed Consent Form and Disease Group Cover Letter. In addition, we have acquired support from Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) to supply nivolumab for the trial at no cost. In addition, University of Virginia will be providing us the vaccine for the trial. We submitted the protocol to Clinical Research Committee (CRC) for approval. After two cycles of review, we have submitted the responses again, which will not have to undergo full review by the committee. We will be submitting the protocol to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after we get final CRC approval. We expect that we will be able to recruit patients for the trial in second quarter of 2022.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Vaccine, anti-PD-1, resistance, safety, PFS, biomarker, PD-1 ⁺ CD38 ^{hi} CD8 ⁺ T cells					
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1. Introduction:

Recently, anti-programmed death (PD)-1 antibodies have been tested in several clinical trials for ovarian cancer (OC) patients. However, monotherapies with blocking PD-1 or its ligand, PD-L1 yield a low rate of objective responses with progression-free survival (PFS) of less than 3 months for patients with recurrent or persistent OC. We have recently identified a major mechanism for the lack of response to anti-PD-1 and resistance to anti-PD-1 that would shed light on the modest clinical outcomes observed for OC patients following PD-1 blockade. We show that in the absence of optimal priming, PD-1 blockade results in generation of dysfunctional CD8⁺ T cells that are identified by the expression of PD-1 and CD38. These cells are non-reprogrammable CD8⁺ T cells that fail to get activated and hence could not show effector functions and incur resistance to further immunotherapy. This therapeutic resistance to anti-PD-1 could be reversed by a proper priming strategy; i.e., simultaneous administration of tumor-specific vaccine with PD-1 blockade. **Hypotheses:** 1) Administration of a vaccine (NY-ESO-179-108 peptide) before anti-PD-1 would be able to reverse the anti-PD-1 therapy resistance and increase the response in patients with platinum-resistant OC. 2) The responding patients will have lower numbers of dysfunctional PD-1⁺CD38^{hi} CD8⁺ T cells than the non-responding patients. **Specific Aims:** **1)** To determine the efficacy (PFS, objective response rate (ORR), overall survival (OS), duration of response (DoR), and disease control rate (DCR)) in patients with metastatic platinum-resistant OC when treated with a vaccine before anti-PD-1 therapy. **2)** To evaluate the immune profile in tumor biopsies and peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs). **Study Design:** We will conduct a phase II study exploring the safety and efficacy of NY-ESO-1 vaccine as a priming mechanism to prevent anti-PD-1 resistance in subjects with stage III/IV platinum-resistant OC. **Impact:** This Phase II trial aims to propose a rational combination treatment of NY-ESO-1 peptide administered before anti-PD-1 therapy in platinum-resistant patients to induce an optimized immune response against the OC. In addition, we expect to identify the immune-related biomarkers of resistance/response to this combination therapy that would be pivotal in developing novel treatment strategies for patients with OC.

2. Keywords: Vaccine, anti-PD-1, resistance, safety, PFS, biomarker, PD-1⁺CD38^{hi} CD8⁺ T cells.

3. Accomplishments:

• What were the major goals of the project?

Major Goals: 1. To determine the efficacy in patients with metastatic platinum-resistant OC when treated with a NY-ESO-1 peptide before anti-PD-1 therapy. 2. To evaluate the immune profile in tumor biopsies and PBMCs.

• What was accomplished under these goals?

Major activities: 1. Development of the clinical protocol based on the grant proposal submitted to DoD.

2. Preparation of Informed Consent Form.

3. Preparation of Disease Group Cover Letter.

4. Endorsement of support from BMS to supply nivolumab for the trial at no cost.

5. CDA with University of Virginia was executed and we submitted the protocol to CRC for approval. We have responded to the final contingencies that will not need to go for full review by the committee.

• What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

"Nothing to Report."

• How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

"Nothing to Report."

• What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

We plan to re-submit the protocol for approval from the CRC and then will submit to IRB in the next reporting period.

4. Impact:

What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?

"Nothing to Report."

What was the impact on other disciplines?

"Nothing to Report."

What was the impact on technology transfer?

"Nothing to Report."

What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?

"Nothing to Report."

5. Changes/Problems:

• Changes in approach and reasons for change

No changes.

- **Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them**

Due to the pandemic, there were significant delays in getting the regulatory approval for the protocol. However, the protocol is now in the final stages of approval by CRC and will soon be submitted to IRB.

- **Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures**

None.

- **Significant changes in use or care of human subjects**

None.

6. Products:

"Nothing to Report."

7. Participants & Other Collaborating Organizations:

What individuals have worked on the project?

Name:	<i>Samir N Khleif</i>
Project Role:	<i>PI</i>
Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	0000-0003-2707-5224
Nearest person month worked:	
Contribution to Project:	<i>As a PI, he was involved in development of the protocol for the clinical trial.</i>
Funding Support:	

Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?

No

What other organizations were involved as partners?

- ◇ **Organization Name:** Hackensack University Medical Center
- ◇ **Location of Organization:** Hackensack, New Jersey
- ◇ **Partner's contribution to the project**
 - **Collaboration:** This is the second site where the study will be conducted.

- ◇ **Organization Name:** University of Virginia
- ◇ **Location of Organization:** Charlottesville, VA
- ◇ **Partner's contribution to the project**
 - **Other:** They will provide an NY-ESO-1 peptide (residues 79-108) that they have used for their Mel60 clinical trial (NCT02126579, LPV7/tet plus TLR agonists and/or IFA).

- ◇ **Organization Name:** Bristol Myers Squibb
- ◇ **Location of Organization:** New York, NY
- ◇ **Partner's contribution to the project**
 - **In-kind support:** They will provide Nivolumab for the trial at no cost.

8. **Special Reporting Requirements:** None for this period.

9. **Appendices:**

None.