

Boosting Education While Boosting the Immune System

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Boosting Education While Boosting the Immune System

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Purpose

To educate staff and patients on immune-mediated adverse event.

Significance & Background

- Since 2011 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released over 80 drug approvals and/or new indications for Cancer.
- This number is expected to rise as science, technology and therapeutics advance with a more personalized approach to Cancer Care.
- In 2014, all 10 of newly FDA approved drugs worked by attacking the cancer on the molecular level.

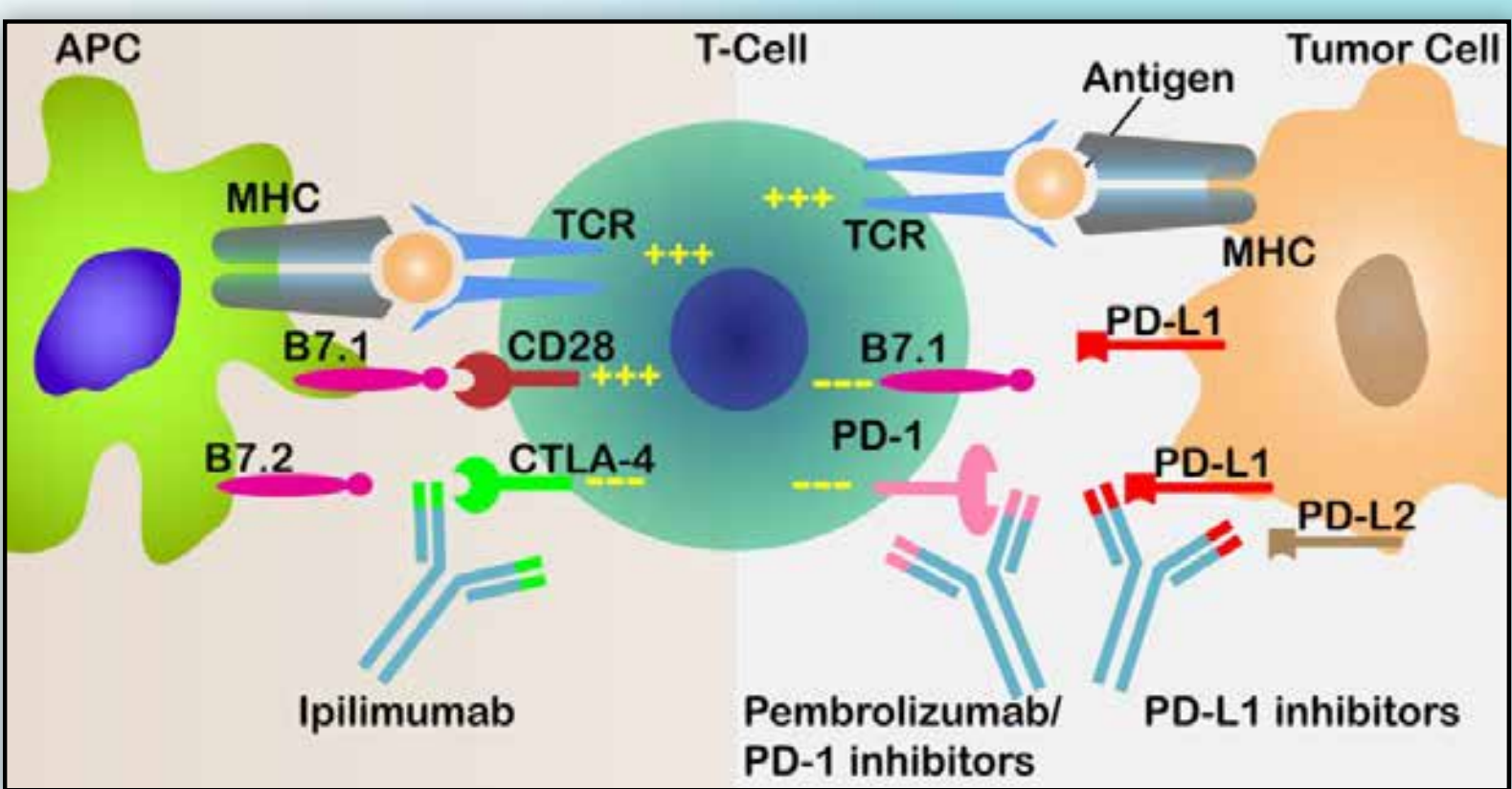
Background

- Immune-mediated adverse reactions are common in patients treated with immunotherapies.
- Since 2011, Lehigh Valley Health Network has opened more than 20 clinical trials including immunotherapies.
- Combined with approval of ipilimumab in 2011, and pembrolizumab and nivolumab in 2014, the number of patients receiving immunotherapy has increased.



* as of 3/28/16

Mechanism of Action



From: Programmed Cell Death-1 (PD-1) Pathway Checkpoint Inhibition: Immunology for Advanced Melanoma, 2011.

Interventions

- Inpatient and outpatient nurses identified the topic of immunotherapy and adverse events for education during a learning needs assessment
 - Oncology nurse leaders provided in-services to staff specific to the drugs with a large concentration on immune-mediated adverse reactions.

In-Services



- The Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) Cancer Program Patient Education also identified a need for patient education material.
 - A patient education book was developed to provide unique information related to immunotherapy, specifically how to recognize immune-mediated adverse reactions.

Excerpt from Patient Education

Side Effects and Management of Side Effects

What are side effects?

- Symptom(s) caused by a medication that could be unpleasant.
- The side effects listed below may be serious side effects, called immune-mediated adverse reactions, and should not be ignored.
- Do not treat these symptoms yourself or with over the counter medication.
- Please contact your cancer care team if you develop any of these side effects.

What causes side effects?

- Immunotherapy can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues and affect the way they work.
- Remember immunotherapy works by "revving up" your immune system.
- This can cause your immune system to "attack" your organs and produce side effects.

Will I get side effects?

- Everyone's experience is unique.
- Side effects depend on the immunotherapy you are taking and how your immune system reacts to the treatment.
- It is important to report how you feel to your cancer care team.

When do the side effects occur?

- The side effects may happen any time during treatment or even after your treatment has ended.

What can be done about side effects?

- Since the immune-mediated adverse reactions or side effects are caused as a result of the immune-system being "revved up", the best way to manage these side effects is to calm the immune system.
- This is usually done with high dose, intravenous steroids.
- Over-the-counter medication or managing these symptoms on your own will not stop these side effects.
- The side effects can be serious or even life-threatening so it is important to notify your doctor right away if you develop any symptoms outlined below.
- This leads to early detection and prompt treatment.
- As discussed these side effects can be very serious – but they are treatable.

Evaluation

- Written and verbal feedback of staff reported an increase in knowledge of immunotherapies and their adverse events following the in-services.
- Patients are reporting signs and symptoms of immune-mediated adverse reactions leading to direct hospital admission for prompt management with corticosteroids.

Discussion

- Innovative strategies to educate staff and patients are needed to provide quality care to a growing population of patients receiving immunotherapy.
- The adverse events of immunotherapy are common and much different than chemotherapy or radiation side effects.
- To maintain patient safety, it is imperative for nurses to recognize the symptoms.
- Oncology nurse leaders continue to provide staff education and in-services as needed.

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