SHODH SAGAR®
International Journal for Research Publication and Seminar
ISSN: 2278-6848 | Vol. 15 | Issue 2 | Apr - Jun 2024 | Peer Reviewed & Refereed

Advances in Immunotherapy for Cancer Treatment: Targeting the Immune System to Fight Tumors

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.36676/jrps.v15.i2.1592
Accepted: 14/04/2024 Published: 30/06/2024

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Abstract:

A revolutionary new method for treating cancer, immunotherapy uses the immune system to specifically target and kill tumor cells. Recent developments in immunotherapy and its function in cancer treatment are summarized in this article. This article provides a comprehensive overview of immunotherapeutic techniques, including bispecific antibodies, cancer vaccines, immune checkpoint combo therapy, checkpoint inhibitors, TIL therapy, CAR T-cell therapy, and cancer vaccines. It also discusses the mechanisms of action of these strategies and their clinical uses. Immunotherapy has shown tremendous promise in the treatment of many malignancies, according to recent important advances in the area as well as clinical data and case studies.

Key words: Cancer, Treatment, Targeting, Immune System, etc.

Introduction

With an impact on millions of lives across the globe, cancer continues to be a major obstacle in healthcare. Toxic side effects, tumor heterogeneity, and resistance development are common problems with the effectiveness of conventional cancer treatments such radiation therapy,

surgery, and chemotherapy. “Immunotherapy, which uses the immune system to specifically target and destroy cancer cells, has recently emerged as a game-changer in cancer treatment, giving patients renewed optimism. The mechanism of action of immunotherapy in the fight against cancer is to activate or strengthen the immune system's inherent defenses. Immunotherapy differs from more traditional cancer treatments in that it trains the immune system to identify and destroy tumors rather than cancer cells themselves. Specificity, long-term response durability, and the possibility of remission are only a few of the benefits of this technique.

Overview of Immunotherapy:

Immunotherapy is a game-changer in cancer treatment because it provides new ways to activate and strengthen the immune system to combat cancer. Immunotherapy works by utilizing the immune system's natural capacity to identify and destroy cancer cells, as opposed to conventional treatments that directly attack cancer cells. An outline of the many immunotherapy methods and how they work is given in this section.

1. Checkpoint Inhibitors:

To unlock the immune response's brakes, monoclonal antibodies called checkpoint inhibitors go after inhibitory receptors on immune cells or the ligands released by tumor cells. The primary molecules that are targeted by these checkpoints are cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated protein 4, programmed death-ligand 1 (PD-L1), and programmed cell death protein 1 (PD-1). The cytotoxic activity of T lymphocytes is unleashed by checkpoint inhibitors, which disable these checkpoints, resulting in accelerated tumor cell death. One example of a well-known checkpoint inhibitor is pembrolizumab; another is ipilimumab. These inhibitors have been approved for use in multiple cancer types.

2. CAR T-cell Therapy:

In chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, patients' T cells are genetically modified to produce chimeric receptors that target particular tumor antigens. After being reinfused into the patient, these modified T cells identify and eliminate cancer cells that express the specific antigen. Patients suffering from B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL)” or B-cell

lymphomas who have experienced relapse or resistance to previous treatments have shown exceptional improvement after receiving CAR T-cell therapy for hematologic malignancies.

3. Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes (TILs):

Immune cells, especially T lymphocytes, are extracted from tumor tissue, grown in a lab, and then infused back into a patient as part of TIL therapy. The tumor-specific cytotoxicity and efficient targeting and elimination of cancer cells are hallmarks of these activated T cells. When administered in conjunction with lymphodepletion and interleukin-2 (IL-2), TIL treatment has demonstrated encouraging outcomes in melanoma and other solid malignancies.

4. Cancer Vaccines:

Cancer vaccines aim to stimulate the immune system to recognize and mount an immune response against tumor-specific antigens. “These vaccines may consist of tumor-associated antigens, tumor-specific antigens, or neoantigens derived from somatic mutations. Cancer vaccines can be prophylactic, therapeutic, or personalized, tailored to individual patients based on their tumor profile. Sipuleucel-T, an autologous cellular immunotherapy, is the first FDA-approved cancer vaccine for metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer.

5. Immune Checkpoint Combination Therapy:

A potential technique to improve the anti-tumor immune response is to combine several checkpoint inhibitors or to combine checkpoint inhibitors with other therapeutic modalities such targeted therapy, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or multiple inhibitors. Merging nivolumab with ipilimumab, for example, has shown to work better than either drug alone in treating melanoma, NSCLC, and RCC.

6. Bispecific Antibodies:

Bispecific antibodies are engineered molecules that can simultaneously bind to both tumor cells and immune effector cells, such as T cells or natural killer (NK) cells. By bringing these cells into close proximity, bispecific antibodies facilitate tumor cell recognition and destruction by the immune system. Blinatumomab, a bispecific T-cell engager (BiTE) antibody, has shown efficacy in relapsed or refractory acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and is being investigated in other hematologic malignancies and solid tumors.

Key Advances in Immunotherapy:

Immunotherapy has witnessed remarkable advancements in recent years, transforming the landscape of cancer treatment and offering new avenues for patients with various malignancies. This section highlights some of the key advances in immunotherapy and their clinical implications.

1. Checkpoint Inhibitors:

Checkpoint inhibitors, particularly those targeting PD-1, PD-L1, and CTLA-4, have revolutionized cancer treatment across multiple tumor types. Key advances include the approval of pembrolizumab and nivolumab as first-line treatments for advanced melanoma, non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), and renal cell carcinoma (RCC), leading to improved overall survival and long-term responses in a subset of patients. Additionally, the combination of nivolumab and ipilimumab has demonstrated superior efficacy compared to monotherapy in melanoma and NSCLC, paving the way for novel combination approaches.

2. CAR T-cell Therapy:

CAR T-cell therapy has shown unprecedented success in hematologic malignancies, particularly in relapsed or refractory B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and B-cell lymphomas. Recent advancements include the development of second-generation CAR T cells with enhanced persistence and efficacy, as well as the expansion of CAR T-cell therapy to other hematologic malignancies such as multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). Furthermore, efforts to mitigate toxicity and improve manufacturing processes have led to broader clinical applications and increased accessibility of CAR T-cell therapy.

3. Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes (TILs):

TIL therapy has demonstrated promising results in metastatic melanoma and other solid tumors, with durable responses observed in a subset of patients. Recent advances include the optimization of TIL isolation and expansion techniques, as well as the identification of predictive biomarkers to select patients most likely to benefit from therapy". Combination approaches involving TIL therapy and checkpoint inhibitors have shown synergistic effects and improved outcomes in melanoma, highlighting the potential for combination immunotherapy strategies.

4. Cancer Vaccines:

Cancer vaccines have evolved from early experimental therapies to clinically validated treatments with demonstrated efficacy in certain malignancies. Recent advances include the development of personalized cancer vaccines targeting neoantigens derived from individual tumors, as well as the optimization of vaccine delivery systems to enhance immune responses. Clinical trials evaluating cancer vaccines in combination with other immunotherapies or conventional treatments are ongoing, with the aim of further improving treatment outcomes.

5. Immune Checkpoint Combination Therapy:

"Combining multiple checkpoint inhibitors or combining checkpoint inhibitors with other therapeutic modalities has emerged as a promising strategy to enhance anti-tumor immune responses and overcome resistance mechanisms". Key advances include the approval of combination therapies such as nivolumab plus ipilimumab for melanoma and NSCLC, as well as ongoing clinical trials investigating novel combination regimens in various tumor types. Biomarker-driven approaches to patient selection and predictive modeling are being explored to optimize treatment strategies and maximize clinical benefit.

6. Review of literature

(Conniot et al., 2014) studied "Cancer immunotherapy: nanodelivery approaches for immune cell targeting and tracking" and said that Since cancer is so complex and affects people all over the world, new and improved treatment methods are urgently needed. In addition to being ineffective, the treatments that are currently accessible are dangerous. Thanks to progress in tumor biology and immunology, low-toxicity tailored immunotherapies are now within reach. Scientists are looking into targeted immunotherapy as a way to avoid immune suppression and the wide variety of cancer cells. In an effort to decrease systemic exposure to targeted therapy, functionalized particles are employed in nanodelivery systems for imaging, diagnostics, and cancer targeting. Both preclinical and clinical trials of novel formulations based on nanoplatforms are now underway.

(Zavala & Kalergis, 2015) studied "New clinical advances in immunotherapy for the treatment of solid tumours" and said that Advancements in our understanding of immune system regulation and cancer cell evasion have opened the door to new therapeutic approaches that can now target and destroy cancer cells with pinpoint accuracy. Finding tumor antigens that

provide immune cells specificity and improving effector immune cell activation are the main aims of immunotherapy research. Recent FDA clearances were given to monoclonal antibodies that target programmed cell death 1 and T-lymphocyte-associated antigen 4, respectively, due to their promising results in clinical trials.

(Kamta et al., 2017) studied "Advancing Cancer Therapy with Present and Emerging Immuno-Oncology Approaches" and said that In immuno-oncology (I-O), researchers look at cancer treatments that get the immune system to kill cancer cells. By utilizing checkpoint inhibitors and other non-invasive medications, T-cells can fight cancer without being directly treated. Oncolytic viruses, cancer vaccines, bi-specific T-cell engagers, adoptive cell transfer, and direct changes in vitro are examples of active treatments that are given to patients. More information may be obtained from ongoing clinical trials, as the medicines in question are still in their infancy. There is a lot of hope for the future of cancer treatment using these medications, even though they have not yet achieved their full therapeutic potential.

(M. Liu & Guo, 2018) studied "Recent updates on cancer immunotherapy" and said that Through the use of patient-derived cells, tumor cell DNA, RNA, or oncolytic viruses, precision medicine in cancer immunotherapy aims to detect tumor antigens, guide the immune system to target cancer cells, and create personalized vaccines against cancer. It is the goal of this review to highlight recent advances in immunotherapy techniques.

(J. Liu et al., 2019) studied "Nanoparticle-Based Nanomedicines to Promote Cancer Immunotherapy: Recent Advances and Future Directions" and said that Inadequate tumor tissue accumulation and fatal side effects limit cancer immunotherapy's efficacy, despite its promise as a cancer terminator. Nanotechnology equips nanoparticles with reasonable physicochemical properties that enable them to transcend these technological hurdles. Advancements in nanoparticle-based cancer immunotherapies have been substantial, encompassing novel approaches such as traditional vaccines, modified immune cells, and the blocking of immunological checkpoints. The future may hold the possibility of combining multiple immunotherapies for the purpose of more efficient cancer suppression and elimination.

(Baeza, 2020) studied "Tumor Targeted Nanocarriers for Immunotherapy" and said that Following the discovery of nanoparticles in tumoral tissues, researchers worked to build nanocarriers capable of specifically transporting therapeutic medications. There are just a few of commercially available nanomedicines due to issues including inadequate penetration

capability and tumor-type dependence. Taking use of immune cells' capacity to recognize and absorb nanoparticles has allowed for the selective distribution of immunoregulating medications. Combining immunotherapy with nanoparticles could provide patients with safer and more effective antitumoral treatments.

(Dhar et al., 2021) studied "Cancer immunotherapy: Recent advances and challenges" and said that Immunotherapy, which involves focusing on specific immune system components, is one way to fight diseases like cancer. By restoring genomic stability after DNA damage, it targets cancer cells. Reducing the probability of cancer occurrence is the objective of cancer prevention. New methods for treating cancer have emerged in recent years, such as targeted small molecules and chemotherapy. Cancer immunotherapy is an innovative approach that aims to train the immune system to fight cancer by doing things like raising the number of T lymphocytes that target cancer or using antibodies that inhibit proteins made by cancer cells.

(Dou et al., 2021) studied "Advances in technology and applications of nanoimmunotherapy for cancer" and said that The host immune system plays a crucial role in tumor growth and spread. Immunogenic cell death (ICD) can start a strong host anti-immune reaction, while neoantigens can start an immune response specific to tumors. However, because it dampens the host immune responses, the tolerogenic milieu represents an obstacle to tumor immunotherapy. Using nanotechnology to target the release of tumor antigens, change the tumor microenvironment in the cold, and enable persistent ICD mediation is one unique approach to these difficulties.

(Tang et al., 2021) studied "Advantages of targeting the tumor immune microenvironment over blocking immune checkpoint in cancer immunotherapy" and said that This work not only criticizes current cancer immunotherapies but also shows how regulators of the tumor immunological milieu play a role in tumor immune surveillance and evasion. This finding provides more evidence that medicines that target these regulators, either alone or in combination with those that target immunological checkpoints, may one day be useful for cancer patients.

(Mishra et al., 2022) studied "Emerging Trends in Immunotherapy for Cancer" and said that Immunotherapies, made possible by developments in cancer immunology, have improved the prognosis for "patients with relapsed or treatment-resistant metastatic cancers. From the first inhibitor's 2011 FDA approval to the current crop of innovative cancer vaccines, adoptive cell therapies, monoclonal antibodies, cytokine therapies, oncolytic viruses, and immune

checkpoint inhibitors", the pharmaceutical industry has seen a proliferation of innovative solutions. There has been enormous development in the area since then.

(Peterson et al., 2022) studied "Recent Advances and Challenges in Cancer Immunotherapy" and said that The significant impact of cancer immunotherapy on oncology has led to the development of novel immunotherapeutic techniques including cancer vaccination, T-cell treatment, and immune checkpoint inhibition. This overview covers the latest findings in immuno-oncology, tumor immunology, and the possibility of new ways to treat cancer.

(Yu et al., 2022) studied "Harnessing the immune system by targeting immune checkpoints: Providing new hope for Oncotherapy" and said that The use of immunotherapy has revolutionized cancer treatment. Permanent remission and cures are within reach when the immune system is activated. Immune checkpoint blockades that target CTLA4 and PD-1/PD-L1 have improved survival rates in some patient populations. New medications that target checkpoint molecules expressed by cancer cells and immune cells are currently undergoing clinical testing. In order to eradicate tumors more effectively, immunotherapies can be enhanced by utilizing combination medications that aim at immunological checkpoints.

(Kciuk et al., 2023) studied "Recent Advances in Molecular Mechanisms of Cancer Immunotherapy" and said that Despite the fact that cancer treatment has come a long way, it remains a major issue in public health. In order to reduce side effects, targeted cancer treatments must be improved. Immunotherapy has recently surpassed more conventional cancer treatments including radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery as the preferred form of treatment. Advances in regulating immunological checkpoints, developing vaccines, genetically modifying cells, and enhancing the antitumor immune response have led to the emergence of new therapeutic options.

(D. Liu et al., 2023) studied "Tumor Vaccines: Unleashing the Power of the Immune System to Fight Cancer" and said that the major focuses of this review are the tumor microenvironment (TME) and the latest advances in cancer vaccine research. Topics covered include the current state of tumor vaccine research and the pathways involved in tumor immunity. The review covers the advantages, disadvantages, and effectiveness of vaccines based on peptides, DNA/RNA, viral vectors, dendritic cells, and whole cells. It also explores the innovative strategy of combining tumor vaccines with other treatments such targeted therapy, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, immune checkpoint inhibitors, and oncolytic virotherapy and

other similar approaches. Review results indicate that tumor vaccinations may significantly enhance cancer patients' prognoses.

7. Bispecific Antibodies:

Bispecific antibodies represent a novel class of immunotherapeutic agents with the potential to enhance tumor targeting and immune activation. Recent advances include the development of bispecific T-cell engagers (BiTEs) targeting tumor-associated antigens and immune checkpoints, as well as the optimization of bispecific antibody constructs to improve pharmacokinetics and reduce off-target effects. Clinical trials evaluating bispecific antibodies in hematologic malignancies and solid tumors have shown promising results, with durable responses observed in a subset of patients.

Conclusion:

With the advent of immunotherapy, a new era in cancer treatment has begun, providing patients with a glimmer of hope when they receive a cancer diagnosis. The incredible results of immunotherapy highlight the game-changing possibilities of using the immune system to fight cancer. Improved survival rates and long-lasting responses have been achieved in some cancer patients thanks to immunotherapy innovations such as customized vaccinations, CAR T-cell treatment, and checkpoint inhibitors. But there are obstacles to immunotherapy as well. Maximizing the efficacy of these treatments remains a considerable challenge due to mechanisms of resistance, tumor heterogeneity, and adverse effects associated to the immune system. A tailored strategy is crucial for enhancing treatment outcomes, as we continue to understand the tumor microenvironment and the immune system's role in cancer cells' interactions. By allowing us to precisely target tumors while limiting collateral damage to healthy tissues, personalized immunotherapy provides a tailored response to the intrinsic complexity of cancer. It is possible to personalize treatment plans for patients by utilizing biomarker-driven methods, adoptive cell treatments, neoantigen-based vaccinations, and rational combination tactics.

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