

Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC) Annual Meeting 2015,

National Harbor, Washington, US - 4 to 8 November 2015

As we all know, the field of Immunotherapy in Cancer is expanding rapidly, and so the 30th SITC Annual Meeting was their biggest meeting thus far. Over 2000 participants were present, consisting mainly of basic scientists, but also included physicians and people working for regulatory bodies (FDA, EMA).

The official meeting started on the 6th of November, but two days prior to the meeting they arranged different workshops/short meetings. The first morning they gave an overview of the currently approved immunotherapies and on how the FDA/EMA work. I learned about the differences between the two regulatory bodies and their assistance prior to starting a clinical trial. The second day an overview was given on immunotherapy in cancer in general by renowned speakers in the field. Besides their clear overview it was good to see all the faces behind the major publications in the field.

Hot topics during the meeting were the anti-PD-1 monoclonal antibodies in diverse tumor types and the detection and usage of neoantigens. Where anti-PD-1 now has proven to be beneficial in melanoma and lung cancer, multiple other tumor types so similar benefit. The usage of neoantigens in an personal treatment is so novel, data from several patients are promising but larger clinical trials should be started.

Furthermore, because of the high costs of certain immunotherapies, they organized a debate of the usage of biomarkers. The debate focused on usage of PD-L1 expression as a predictor of response to anti-PD-1, which apparently the value as PD-L1 expression as a biomarker is strongly dependent on the tumor type discussed. Overall, better biomarkers are needed. The development wasn't further discussed in plenary sessions but in the poster sessions it was clear that a lot of effort is done to find proper biomarkers. Especially the data on infiltration of immune cells had my interest.

The Americans sure know how to organize a meeting. Despite the long hours and informational overload, it was a great meeting, both to hear about the newest developments in the field as well as to meet people working on the same topic.

I would hereby like to thank the NVVI for their financially support that gave me the opportunity to visit the meeting and present my poster on dendritic cell vaccination in high-risk uveal melanoma patients.