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Bristol-Myers Squibb (B-MS) and Eli Lilly have entered into a clinical trial collaboration to evaluate the safety and efficacy of BMS' immunotherapy Opdivo (nivolumab) in combination with Lilly's galunisertib (LY2157299) as a potential treatment for advanced glioblastoma, hepatocellular carcinoma, and non-small cell lung cancer. Lilly will conduct the trials.

Opdivo is a human programmed death receptor-1 (PD-1) blocking antibody that binds to the PD-1 receptor expressed on activated T-cells. Galunisertib is a TGF beta R1 kinase inhibitor that in-vitro selectively blocks TGF beta signaling, which promotes tumor growth, suppresses the immune system and increases the ability of tumors to spread. This collaboration will address the hypothesis that co-inhibition of PD-1 and TGF beta negative signals may lead to enhanced anti-tumor immune responses than inhibition of either pathway alone.

"Advanced solid tumors represent a serious unmet medical need among patients with cancer. Our clinical collaboration with Lilly underscores Bristol-Myers Squibb's continued commitment to explore combination regimens from our immuno-oncology portfolio with other mechanisms of action that may accelerate the development of new treatment options for patients," said Mr Michael Giordano, senior vice president, head of development, Oncology, BMS.

"Combination therapies will be the key to address tumor heterogeneity and the inevitable resistance that is likely to develop to even the most promising new tailored therapies," said Mr Richard Gaynor, senior vice president, Product Development and Medical Affairs, Lilly Oncology. He added, "To that end, having multiple cancer pathways and technology platforms will be critical in an era of combinations to ensure sustainability beyond any single asset."