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Merck's Keytruda proves promising against gastric cancer

01 October 2014 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Merck's Keytruda has shown positive results in phase I studies against gastric cancer. The drug was earlier approved for the treatment of advanced melanoma.

"Merck is advancing the development of Keytruda across different tumor types and lines of therapy. We are encouraged by the signals of anti-tumor activity in advanced gastric cancer, and are eager to move ahead with the Phase II study to better understand the potential of KEYTRUDA in advanced gastric cancer," said Dr Alise Reicin, vice president, Oncology, Merck Research Laboratories.

In the study involving 39 patients with PD-L1 positive, advanced gastric cancer, treatment with Keytruda led to significant tumor shrinkage in 12 patients or 31 percent of them.

Based on this data, Merck said that it would initiate a pivotal Phase II study in the first quarter of 2015 to further explore the use of Keytruda in advanced gastric cancer.

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