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Merck inks oncology pact with MD Anderson Cancer Center

18 August 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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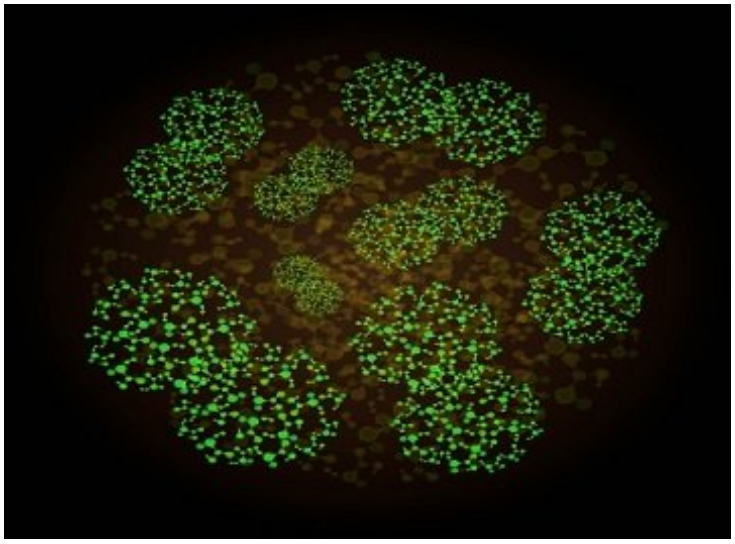

Merck and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center has announced that they have entered into a strategic clinical research collaboration to evaluate Merck's anti-PD-1 therapy, KEYTRUDA (pembrolizumab), in combination with other treatments, such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy and/or novel antitumor medicines.

Under the terms of the agreement, collaborative studies will be conducted in the following tumor types: gastroesophageal adenocarcinoma, pancreatic adenocarcinoma, and hepatocellular carcinoma -- over the three year period of the collaboration. The first studies are scheduled to start enrolling later this year.

The agreement aims to define what combination modalities will work best with KEYTRUDA in these types of tumors by exploring promising new alternatives. The studies will be conducted in parallel, in order to determine optimal regimens in the most efficient manner possible. All studies will feature state-of-the-art monitoring protocols and built-in flexibility to take advantage of the very latest information available.

"Through these types of collaborations, we are able to engage in larger, more comprehensive studies that aim to accelerate the pace of discovery. We believe that this new agreement will help to speed delivery of new cancer treatments that our patients expect and deserve," said Dr Patrick Hwu, division head, cancer medicine at MD Anderson.

"This agreement embodies Merck's commitment to collaborating with leaders in the field to rapidly advance breakthrough science and further the goal of bringing new treatment approaches to patients. Agreements like this are an integral part of our strategy to evaluate KEYTRUDA in multiple tumors and combinations," said Dr Roger Dansey, senior vice-president and therapeutic area head, oncology late-stage development, Merck Research Laboratories.

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