

BMS will win big with melanoma combination immunotherapy: GlobalData

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Data presented at the recent American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting 2015 by Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) suggests that its Opdivo/Yervoy combination of immunotherapies to treat metastatic melanoma will shape the therapeutic landscape once it is approved, says an analyst with research and consulting firm GlobalData.

According to Dr Fenix Leung, GlobalData's analyst covering oncology and hematology, data from BMS' Phase III trial, CheckMate-067, which compared the combination of the Opdivo (nivolumab) and Yervoy (ipilimumab) regimen and Opdivo monotherapy with Yervoy monotherapy, stood out from the crowd because of the combination's exceptional clinical efficacy.

As a consequence, with both Opdivo and Yervoy in its arsenal, GlobalData expects BMS to bag peak-year sales of \$3.28 billion for both the monotherapies and the combination therapy across the eight major markets of the US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, UK, Japan, and Australia in 2023.

Dr Leung commented: "Overall, in terms of clinical efficacy, BMS' immunotherapy combination is a clear winner in the melanoma treatment market. Should Opdivo's competitors continue to focus on monotherapies, GlobalData expects them to have a hard time catching up to BMS' combination therapy in this regard.

"Currently, companies with immuno-oncology drugs, both marketed and pipeline, are teaming up in the hope of repeating BMS' success. Merck is collaborating with Amgen, Dynavax, and Syndax to find a potential Keytruda (pembrolizumab)-containing combination for melanoma, while AstraZeneca has joined hands with Immunocore, Novartis, and Incyte."

However, the analyst warns that unless these companies are able to develop an immunotherapy combination that is more efficacious and/or less toxic than BMS' combination therapy, the New Jersey giant is likely to dominate the melanoma treatment market for a long time.

Dr Leung continued: "Key opinion leaders interviewed by GlobalData are enthusiastic about the efficacy of the combination, and foresee it as the future standard of care. However, issues such as safety and high cost may restrict its sales.

"The high cost of immuno-oncology therapies, especially when drugs are used in combination, is likely to result in a pushback from payers regarding the Opdivo combination regimen, opening the door for competitors, such as Merck's Keytruda. In order to ease payers' resistance, BMS may decide to offer a discount if Opdivo and Yervoy are used in combination," the analyst concluded.