2022 Top Cancer Health Science Stories

Advances in immunotherapy, new drug approvals and news about hard-to-treat cancers caught readers' attention this year.

December 29, 2022 By Liz Highleyman and Ian Anderson

Some years see major advances in cancer care, while others, like 2022, are marked by steady progress—and some setbacks.

COVID-19 was a once again a big topic in the third year of the pandemic. While many people with cancer respond well to COVID vaccines and do not experience more severe outcomes, people with blood cancers and those on certain types of treatment are at greater risk (No. 4). What's more, the pandemic has had a negative effect on cancer care. A silver lining is that advances in mRNA vaccine technology may also help fight cancer.

Much of this year's top treatment news focused on advances in immunotherapy (Nos. 5, 7 and 18). Of note, CAR-T therapy, which was first approved in 2017, has now kept some early clinical trial participants in remission for a decade (No. 9). Most existing immunotherapies aim to enhance T-cell activity, but natural killer cell therapies may soon play a greater role (No. 17).

Researchers showed that the antibody-drug conjugate Enhertu, which was previously approved for breast cancer patients with high HER2 expression, also works for those with low HER2. (Click here for our feature on antibody-drug conjugates).

Notable drug approvals this year included a novel type of immunotherapy known as a bispecific T-engager (Kimmtrack for uveal melanoma), a new CAR-T therapy for multiple myeloma (Carvykti) and the second KRAS inhibitor (Krazati for lung cancer).

Cancer Health readers were especially interested in cancers for which there are few or no good treatments, including esophageal cancer (No. 1), ovarian cancer and pancreatic cancer (Nos. 10 and 13). Liver cancer also drew considerable attention. Now that there's universal vaccination against hepatitis B and effective treatments for hepatitis C, fatty liver disease has become a leading cause of liver cancer (Nos. 6 and 15). This year saw the approval of a new antibody-drug conjugate for ovarian cancer (Elahere) and a CTLA-4-targeted checkpoint inhibitor for liver cancer (Imjudo).

Readers also clicked on news about racial and other disparities in cancer care and treatment (No. 8), cancer risk factors (No. 12) and factors that can affect health and quality of life for people living with cancer and survivors (No. 19). Research continued to pour in about the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise as well as integrative therapies such as yoga and meditation.

Here are the Cancer Health science news stories with the most views this year:

1. Alarming Rise in Esophageal Cancer Seen Among Middle-Aged Adults
Posted: June 7

2. Mutations in Lung Cells Linked to Pack-Years of Smoking
Posted: May 12

3. Drug Turns Cancer Gene Into an "Eat Me" Flag for the Immune System
Posted: September 26

4. Without Boosters, Vaccinated Cancer Patients with Breakthrough COVID-19 Faced 13% Mortality Rate
Posted: January 6

5. Immunotherapy Shows 100% Response Rate for Selected Rectal Cancer Patients
Posted: June 6

6. NAFLD Is Leading Cause of Liver Cancer Among Older Americans
Posted: May 27

7. Lung Cancer Patients With a Genetic Variant Linked to Autoimmune Disease May Respond Better to Immunotherapy
Posted: April 21

8. 40% of Black Patients With Metastatic Breast Cancer Are Not Told About Clinical Trials
Posted: June 8

9. CAR-T Immunotherapy Keeps Cancer in Remission for 10 Years
Posted: February 7

10. AI Model May Predict Elevated Pancreatic Cancer Risk
Posted: April 22

11. FDA Approves First Pre-Surgery Immunotherapy for Lung Cancer
Posted: March 17

12. Hair Relaxers Linked to Higher Risk for Uterine Cancer
Posted: October 19

13. New Insights in How Pancreatic Cysts Progress to Pancreatic Cancer

Posted: October 4

14. Liver Enzyme Tests Often Fail to Identify Cirrhosis
Posted: January 19

15. The Causes of Liver Cancer Are Changing
Posted: July 21

16. FDA Approves New Treatment Option for Ovarian Cancer
Posted: November 17

17. Natural Killer Cells Show Promise as a New Type of Immunotherapy
Posted: April 28

18. Immunotherapy Improves Survival for People With Liver Cancer
Posted: January 20

19. Too Much Sitting Can Shorten Life for Cancer Survivors
Posted: February 8

20. The Dangers Of Septic Shock In Blood Cancer Patients
Posted: January 31

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