

4th MEETING ON INNOVATIVE IMMUNOTHERAPIES FOR LYMPHOID MALIGNANCIES

Presidents
Paolo Corradini
Marco Ruella
Pier Luigi Zinzani

Clinical Results CAR-T for DLBCL: What's Next?

Stephen J. Schuster, M.D.

Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

MILANO, STARHOTELS ROSA GRAND

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Disclosures of Stephen J. Schuster

Company name	Research support	Employee	Consultant	Stockholder	Speakers bureau	Advisory board	Other
AbbVie						X	
ADC Therapeutics						X	
AstraZeneca	X		X			X	
BeiGene						X	
BioNTech			X				
BMS	X					X	
Caribou Bio			X			X	
Genentech/Roche	X					X	
Genmab	X		X			X	
Incyte			X				
Janssen						X	
Novartis	X		X			X	
Vittoria Bio						X	

Large B-cell lymphomas: the remaining unmet need

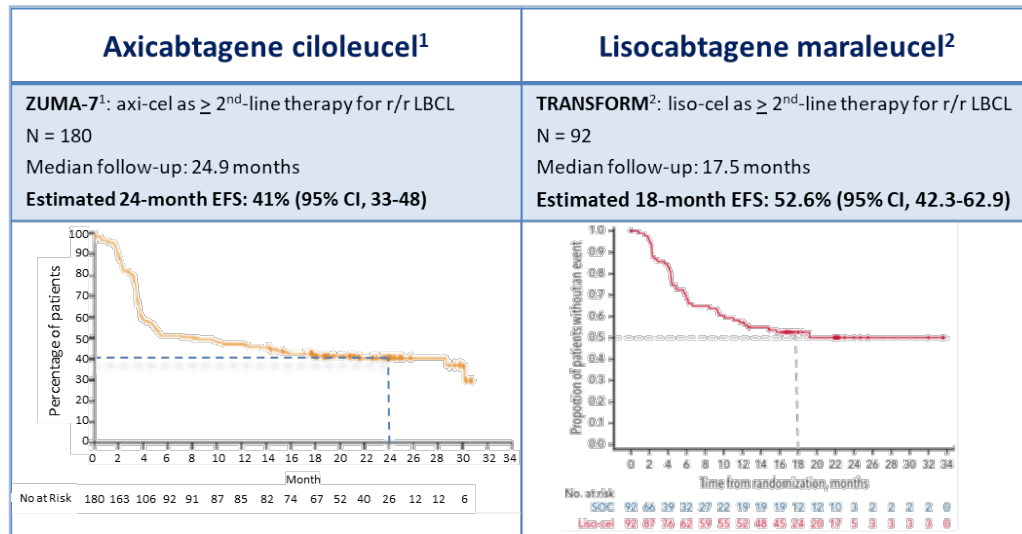
~ 2/3 of patients fail to achieve durable responses with clinically available CAR-T products as 3rd-line therapy

Axicabtagene ciloleucel ¹	Tisagenlecleucel ²	Lisocabtagene maraleucel ³
ZUMA-1¹: axi-cel as \geq 3rd-line therapy for LBCL N = 101 Median follow-up: 63.1 months Estimated 5-year EFS: 30.3%	JULIET²: tisa-cel as > 3rd-line therapy for LBCL N = 115 Median follow-up: 40.3 months Estimated 40-month PFS: ~30%	TRANSCEND³: liso-cel as \geq 3rd-line therapy LBCL N = 256 Median follow-up: 12.3 months Estimated 18-month PFS: 42.1%

¹Neelapu SS, et al. Blood. 2023; Epub ahead of print; ²Schuster SJ, et al. Lancet Oncol 2021;22(10):1403-1415; ³Abramson J, et al. Lancet. 2020;396(10254):839-852.

Large B-cell lymphomas: the remaining unmet need

As 2nd-line, ~1/2 of patients have disease progression or need new lymphoma treatment by 2 years after available CAR-T products



So, do we need a new car?

¹Locke FL, et al. N Engl J Med. 2022;386(7):640-654; ²Abramson, et al. Blood. 2023;141(14):1675-1684.

The question is,

“How can we improve these results?”

The easy answer is,

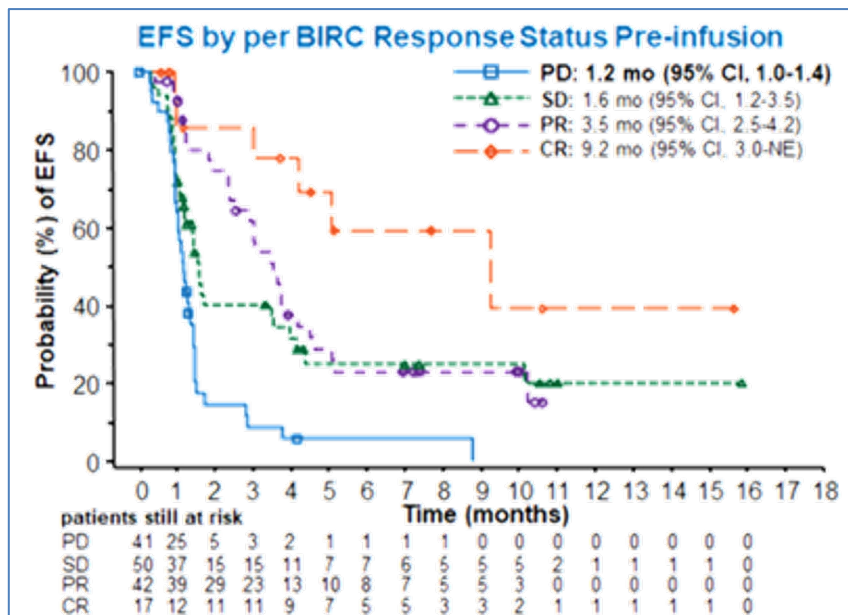
**“Treat patients who are likely to respond
and treat those destined to fail on clinical trials.”**

The next question is,

“So, how do we identify patients destined to fail CAR-T.”

Patient characteristics impact outcome: Disease Control

- Disease status at the time of CAR-T infusion impacts best response and EFS
 - Data from the BELINDA trial: tisagenlecleucel vs SOC



Multivariate Logistic Regression Model for Post-Infusion Best Overall Response (CR/PR vs SD/PD/UNK) in Arm A (second-line CAR-T)

Variable	Odds Ratio Estimates		
	Point Estimate	95% Wald Confidence Limits	
CR/PR before infusion vs. SD/PD before infusion at mean cell dose	7.75	3.23	18.62

The odds ratio is the odds of having a best overall response of CR/PR vs. SD/PD/UNK; *i.e.*, an odds ratio >1 means patients are more likely to have a best overall response of CR/PR.

EFS time is relative to date of tisagenlecleucel infusion; median time from pre-infusion disease assessment to infusion was 10 days (range, 2-57; Q1-Q3, 8-15).

EFS events defined as PD/SD after day 71 from randomization or death at any time.

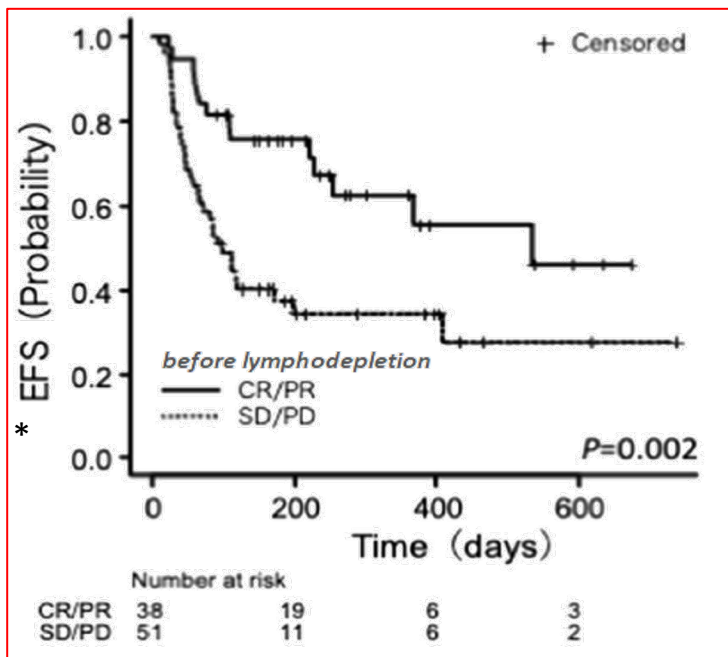
PD = progressive disease; SD = stable disease; PR = partial response; CR = complete response

Bishop *et al.* N Engl J Med. 2021 Dec 14. Epub

Patient characteristics impact outcome: Disease Control

- Disease status at the time of CAR-T infusion impacts best response and EFS
 - Real-world data from Japan for tisagenlecleucel in r/r LBCL

Event-free survival after tisagenlecleucel by disease status *after* bridging therapy and *before* lymphodepletion



*EFS defined as the period from infusion to either progression or death

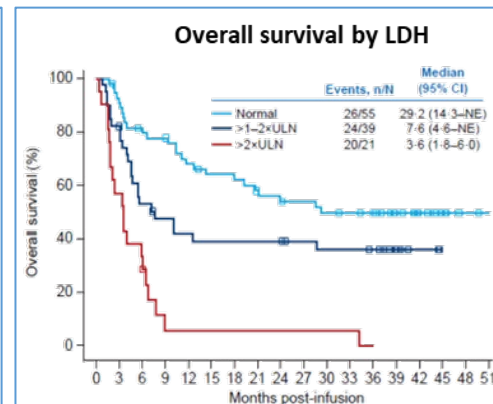
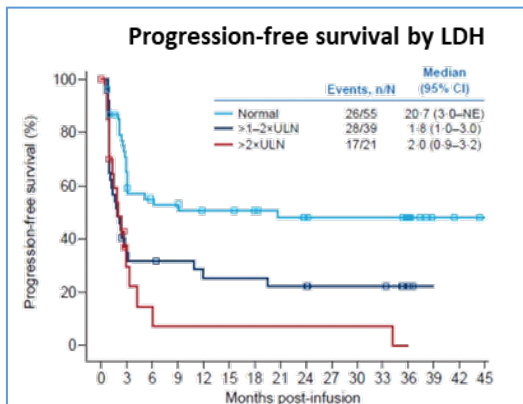
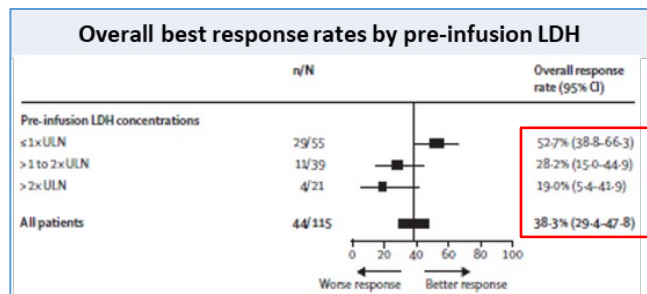
¹Goto H, et al. Int J Clin Oncol. 2023;28:816–826.

Patient characteristics impact outcome: Serum LDH

- Pre-infusion serum LDH impacts response to CAR-T and survival outcome
 - Data from the JULIET trial: Phase 2 trial of tisagenlecleucel in r/r LBCL

Multivariable analysis *		
Predictive Factors from Univariable Analysis	Responders/Patients	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
LDH		
≤ x ULN	29/55	2.74 (0.71-10.56)
>2 x ULN	4/21	
>1 - 2 x ULN	11/39	0.97 (0.23-4.06)
>2 x ULN	4/21	

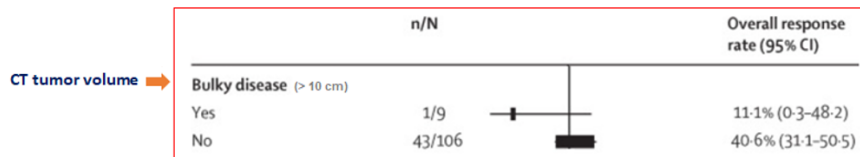
*Lab analytes are defined as the closest time before or on the day of infusion (93% of values were obtained on the day of infusion)



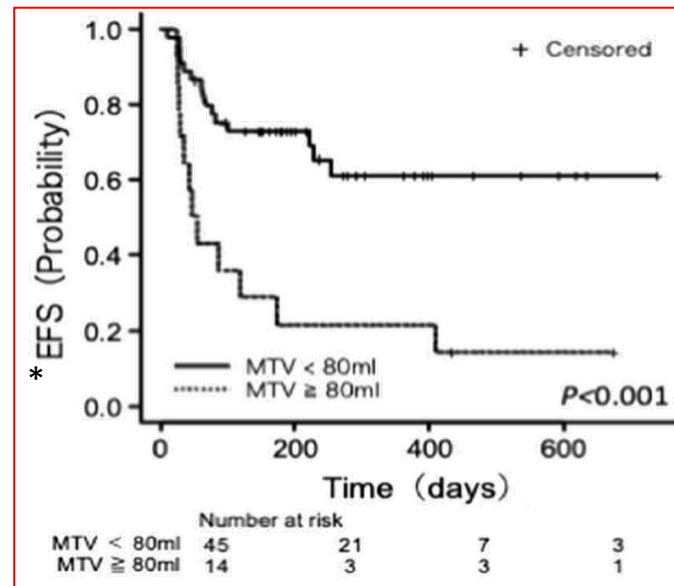
Schuster SJ, *et al.* Lancet Oncol. 2021;22(10):1403-1415.

Patient characteristics impact outcome: Tumor Volume

- Tumor bulk and its impact on response (*"size matters"*)¹
 - Data from JULIET trial: Phase 2 trial of tisagenlecleucel in r/r LBCL



- MTV Data for tisagenlecleucel in r/r LBCL²
 - Real-world evidence from Japan



* EFS defined as the period from infusion to either progression or death

MTV, metabolic tumor volume, EFS, event-free survival

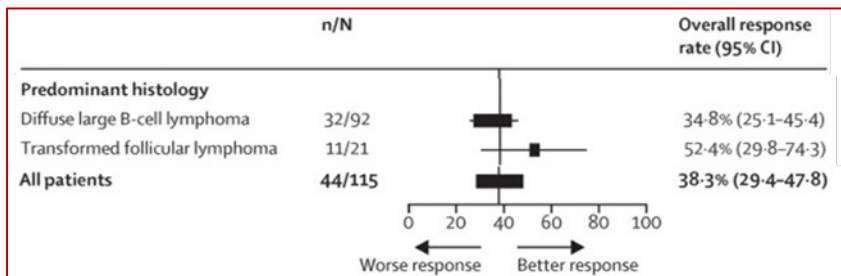
²Goto H, et al. Int J Clin Oncol. 2023;28:816–826.

¹Schuster SJ, et al. Lancet Oncol. 2021;22(10):1403-1415.

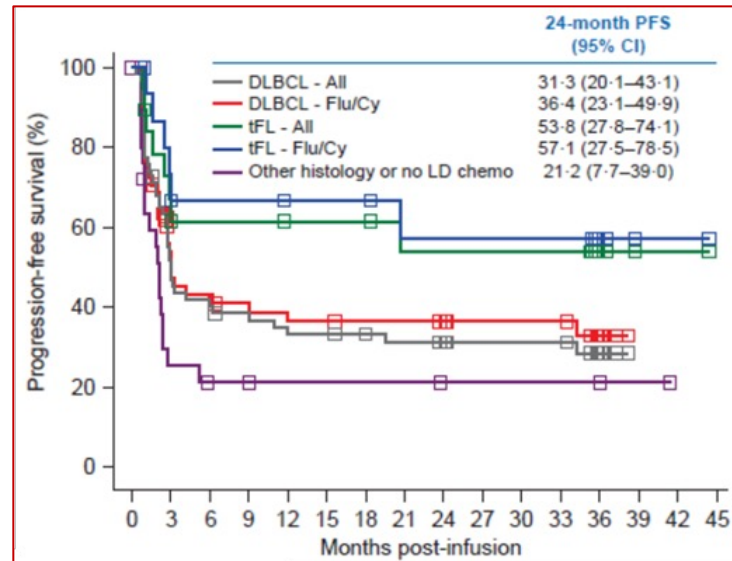
Patient characteristics impact outcome: LBCL Subtype

- Subtype of lymphoma impacts CAR-T response rates and progression-free survival
 - Data from the JULIET trial: Phase 2 trial of tisagenlecleucel in r/r LBCL

Overall response rates by lymphoma subtype



Progression-free survival by lymphoma subtype



Schuster SJ, *et al.* Lancet Oncol. 2021;22(10):1403-141

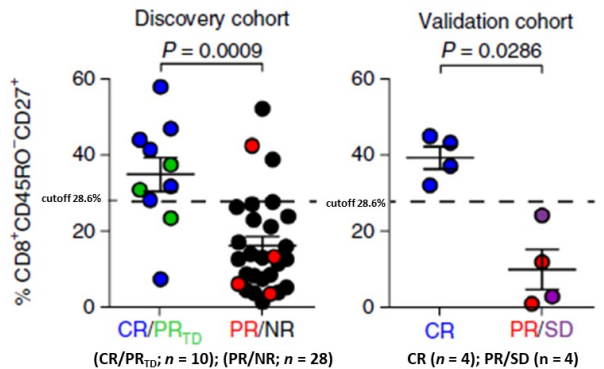
Patient characteristics impact outcome: T cell fitness

T cell fitness refers to the functional capacity and metabolic vigor of T cells, reflected by their ability to effectively *recognize antigens, respond to co-stimulation, proliferate, produce cytokines, differentiate into effector cells, resist exhaustion, and provide immunologic memory.*

Patient characteristics impacting T cell fitness: Considerations

- Age-related immunosenescence
- Lymphoma-related immunosuppression
- Therapy-related (iatrogenic) immunosuppression

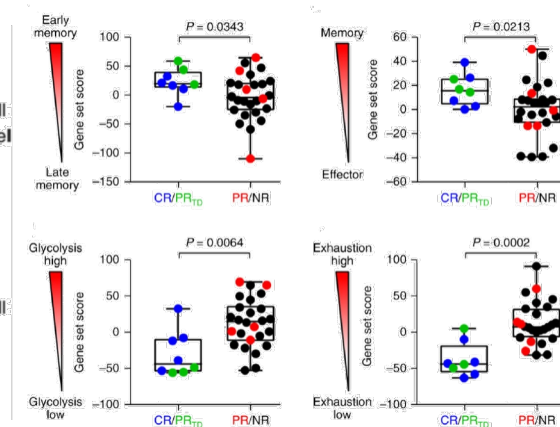
Naïve and memory CD8⁺ T cell content (CD45RO-CD27⁺ cells) in leukapheresis material contribute to response to CAR-T in CLL



Genomic evaluation of CLL patient-derived CAR-T cell products and response to CAR-T cells

Genes Significantly Up- or Down-regulated

Early memory T cell
Nonexhausted T cell
Naïve vs. activated T_H2 CD4⁺ T cell
Unstimulated vs. stimulated memory T cell
Resting vs. bystander activated CD4⁺ T cell
Conventional vs. effector memory T cell
Multipotent vs. progenitor CD4⁺ T cell
Memory vs. effector CD8⁺ T cell
Exhausted vs. effector T cell
Exhausted T cell
Activated T_H2 vs. naïve CD4⁺ T cell
Stimulated vs. unstimulated memory T cell
Glycolysis
Hypoxia
Effector vs. memory CD8⁺ T cell
Apoptosis

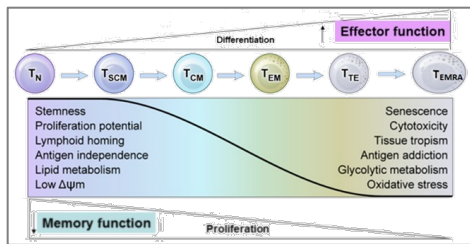


CR, complete remission; PR_{T0}, partial remission with late relapse of transformed disease; PR, partial response; NR, no response

Fraietta, *et al.* Nat Med 2018; 24:563–571.

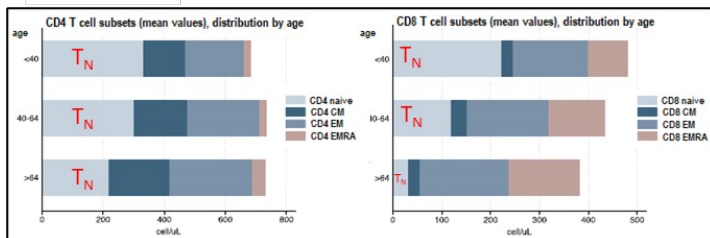
Impact of *Age-Related* Immunosenescence on Naïve and Memory T Cells

- Study of healthy adults (n = 363) established *age-specific, immune cell reference ranges*;
A systematic review and meta-analysis validated these findings (n = 7,425)¹



CD4 naïve
CD4 CM
CD4 EM
CD4 EMRA

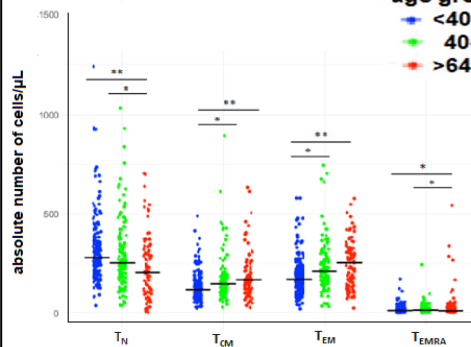
CD8 naïve
CD8 CM
CD8 EM
CD8 EMRA



Demographics and immune cell subsets distribution of study population (n = 363) by three age groups

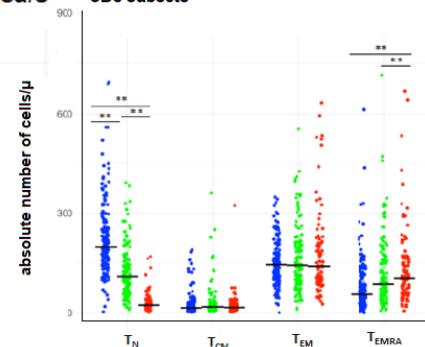
	<40 years old (n = 158)	40–64 years old (n = 127)	>64 years old (n = 78)
Age, median (Q1, Q3)	29 (27, 34)	47 (43, 55)	70.5 (67, 76)
Gender; Male, n (%)	72 (45.6%)	56 (44.1%)	29 (37.2%)

CD4 subsets



age group, years
● <40
● 40-64
● >64

CD8 subsets

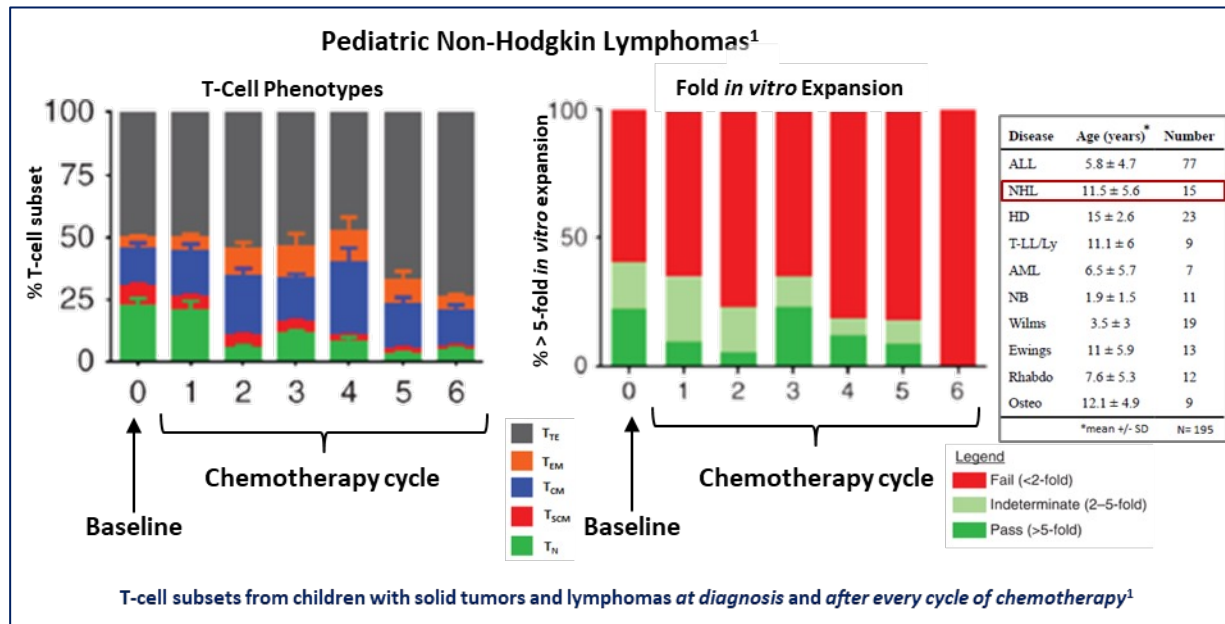


T_N, naïve T cells; T_{SCM}, T stem cell memory cells; T_{CM}, T central memory cells; T_{EM}, T effector memory cells; T_{TE}, T effector cells; T_{EMRA}, CD45RA⁺ terminal effector memory T cells

¹Chang, *et al.* Immunity & Ageing.2024; 21:75

Pre-Existing Lymphoma- and Therapy-Related Immunodeficiency

- Naïve T-cell deficits *at diagnosis* and *after chemotherapy* may impair cell therapy potential



% T_N in blood of healthy children: Distribution by age
CD4, n = 805; CD8, n = 807²

Subset	0-3 mo	2-6 y
CD 4+ /45RA + /62L +	89 (61-94)	70 (50-85)
CD 8+ /45RA + /62L +	79 (56-88)	64 (42-81)
	3-6 mo	6-12 y
CD 4+ /45RA + /62L +	88 (64-92)	58 (42-74)
CD 8+ /45RA + /62L +	77 (53-88)	58 (39-73)
	6-12 mo	12-18 y
CD 4+ /45RA + /62L +	83 (58-91)	51 (31-65)
CD 8+ /45RA + /62L +	72 (47-87)	56 (42-73)
	1-2 y	
CD 4+ /45RA + /62L +	79 (62-90)	
CD 8+ /45RA + /62L +	71 (46-85)	

T_N, naïve T cells; T_{SCM}, T stem cell memory cells; T_{CM}, T central memory cells; T_{EM}, T effector memory cells; T_{TE}, T effector cells; T_{EMRA}, CD45RA⁺ terminal effector memory T cells

¹Das, *et al.* Cancer Discov. 2019; 9(4):492-499.

²Shearer, *et al.* J Allergy Clin Immunol. 2003; 112(5):973-980.

So, how can we more accurately predict CAR-T outcome?



Image adapted from: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/hands-on-crystal-ball-allan-swart.html>

Deep Learning-Based Image Analysis: Radiomics

"Images are more than pictures, they are data." Gillies RJ, et al. Radiology (2016) 278 (2): 563-77.

Hypothesis:

- Radiologic images contain *image-agnostic features* beyond that used to reconstruct humanly recognizable anatomic and functional pictures

Objectives:

- extract *image-agnostic features* (data) from PET/CT images that correlate with clinical outcome using machine learning
- develop a computerized decision support system (program) by retraining a pre-trained neural network (AlexNet¹)
- prospectively validate this program for predicting CAR-T outcome

Validation:

- Analyze *pre-treatment* PET/CT images using the retrained neural network to test prediction of CAR-T outcome with *investigators blinded to patients' outcomes*

Lesion Level Model

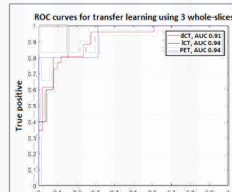
Training Set: Predicting Lesion-level Response from Pre-Treatment Imaging

- Diagnostic performance of lesion-level treatment response predictions for LBCL cohort:
- Data shown for 3 imaging modalities using 3 whole-slice per lesion input and transfer learning approach
 - Median time from imaging to CAR-T infusion: diagnostic CT scan, 15 days (range 4-62 days)
low-dose CT + PET, 30 days (range 5-46 days)

Diagnostic CT scan				
Input	Accuracy	Sensitivity	Specificity	AUC
3-whole slices	0.84 ± 0.05	0.90 ± 0.04	0.76 ± 0.12	0.90 ± 0.05

Low-dose CT scan				
Input	Accuracy	Sensitivity	Specificity	AUC
3-whole slices	0.90 ± 0.05	0.95 ± 0.04	0.74 ± 0.02	0.94 ± 0.07

PET scan				
Input	Accuracy	Sensitivity	Specificity	AUC
3-whole slices	0.90 ± 0.07	0.95 ± 0.05	0.81 ± 0.19	0.95 ± 0.06

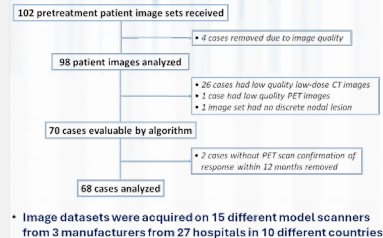


LDCT = low-dose CT scan; CT scan = low-dose CT scan; PET = PET/CT scan

*Sensitivity = correctly identifies lesions in complete remission at 12-months after CAR-T (true positive rate)

*Specificity = correctly identifies lesions not in remission at 12 months or at last follow-up if < 12 months (true negative rate)

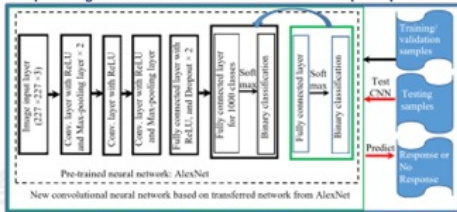
Consort Diagram



Actual patient outcomes per protocol:

- CR at Month-12, n = 19; < CR at Month-12, n = 49
- CR rate at Month-12 = 28%

Deep learning-based architecture used for lesion-level response prediction



CNN = convolutional neural network, ReLU = rectified linear unit, Conv. = convolutional

Binary response output:
CR or non-CR at 12 months post CAR-T

Results

Predicting Outcome from Pretreatment Image Analysis + Pretreatment LDH

- JULIET Cohort: Cumulative Sensitivity and Cumulative Specificity

Pretreatment Serum LDH > 2 x Upper Limit of Normal Predicts Failure (no CR by Month-12)

Input: LDH > 2 x ULN n = 67 (cohort evaluated by image analysis)	Sensitivity	Specificity	Balanced Accuracy*	Positive Predictive Value	Negative Predictive Value
	15%	100%	63%	100%	75%

Deep Learning-Based Image Analysis Predicts Failure (no CR at Month-12) from Pretreatment PET/CT, ≥ 60% Rule

Input: PET + LD-CT, 3 slices each per lesion n = 68	Sensitivity	Specificity	Balanced Accuracy*	Positive Predictive Value	Negative Predictive Value
	49%	77%	63%	85%	37%

Parallel Analysis of Pretreatment DL-Image Analysis + Pretreatment LDH to Predict CAR-T Failure (no CR at Month-12) Cumulative Sensitivity and Cumulative Specificity

Input: DL-Image Analysis + LDH > 2 x ULN	Sensitivity_cumulative	Specificity_cumulative	Balanced Accuracy*	PPV_cumulative	NPV_cumulative
	57%	77%	67%	86%	41%

CR, complete response; LD-CT, low-dose CT; NPV, negative predictive value; PPV, Positive predictive value

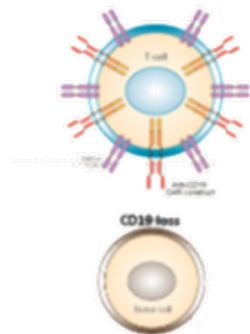
*Balanced Accuracy = (sensitivity + specificity) / 2. Balanced accuracy reported because of imbalance between number of responders and non-responders in test group

¹Tong Y, et al. PLoS ONE 2023;18(7):e0282573.

²Schuster S J, et al. ASH 2025 (poster)

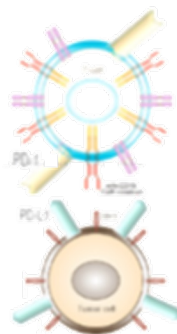
Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

Some Mechanisms of Tumor Resistance to CAR-T Cells Targeting CD19 in B-Cell Lymphomas



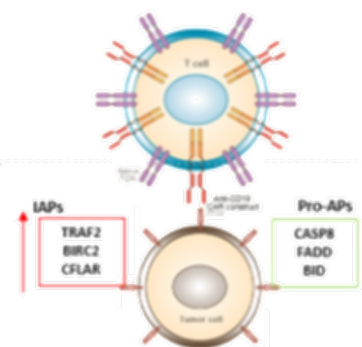
CD19 antigen loss

- acquired mutations and alternative splicing of CD19 (Sotillo et al. Cancer Disc. 2015)



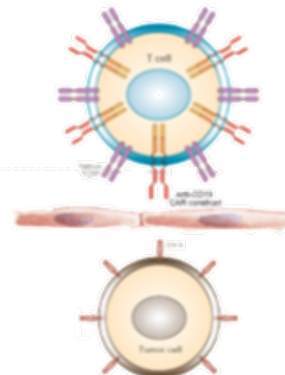
T-cell exhaustion/hypofunction

- mediated by inhibitory ligands on tumor cells and cells in the TME
- peripheral self-tolerance (B cell recovery? late relapses?)
- TME-induced T cell hypofunction (reversible)



Intrinsic tumor resistance

- loss of death receptor signaling molecules causes resistance to CAR T in vitro + in vivo
- failed CAR-T assoc./w lower death receptor-assoc. gene expression by tumor cells (Singh, et al. Cancer Disc. 2020)



Insufficient T-cell infiltration

- T cells paralysis
- physiologic factors (high interstitial fluid pressure, hypoxia, pH)

Recently completed, active, and upcoming *investigator-initiated* clinical trials at UPenn addressing tumor-specific mechanisms of resistance

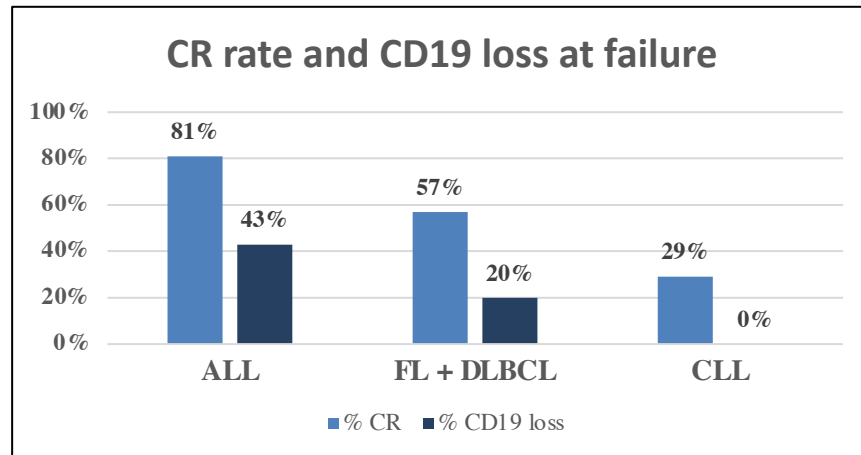
CD19 antigen loss	T-cell exhaustion/hypofunction	Intrinsic tumor resistance	Insufficient T-cell infiltration
<p>Phase II study of dual targeting of CD19 and CD20 antigens using CD19-CAR T cells and CD20-BsAb</p> <p>PI: E. Chong NCT04889716</p> <p>• <i>active</i> • <i>recruiting</i></p>	<p>Interleukin-18 secreting anti-CD19 CAR T cells [huCART19-IL18 cells]</p> <p>PI: J. Svoboda NCT04684563</p> <p>• <i>fully accrued</i></p> <hr/> <p>KIR-CAR/Dap12–modified T cells</p> <p>Pre-clinical completed*</p> <p>*Wang, et al. Cancer Imm Res 2015;3:815</p> <p>PI: S. Schuster NCT06544265</p> <p>• <i>active</i> • <i>recruiting</i></p> <hr/> <p>CD5 knockout CAR-T cells</p> <p>Pre-clinical completed*</p> <p>*Patel, et al. Sci Imm 2024;19:9(97):eadn6509</p> <p>PI: S. Barta NCT06420089</p> <p>• <i>active (for T-cell)</i> • <i>recruiting</i></p>	<p>Venetoclax-resistant CAR T overexpressing mutated BCL-2(F104L) [BCL-2(F104L)-CART19]</p> <p>Pre-clinical completed*</p> <p>* Lee, et al. Cancer Discov 2022;12:2372</p> <p>PI: M. Ruella</p> <p>• <i>clinical trial planned</i></p>	<p><i>Under non-disclosure agreement</i></p>

Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

CD19 antigen loss or downregulation

Early (prehistoric) CTL019 efficacy data from Penn and CHOP

Disease	N	CD19 loss at PD
ALL ¹	30	3/7
FL + DLBCL ²	28	1/5
CLL ³	14	0/10



- More responsive diseases seem more likely to fail due to CD19 loss
- Less responsive diseases, like CLL, require alternative explanations

¹Maude S, et al. NEJM. 2014; 371(16): 1507-1517; ²Schuster SJ, et al. N Engl J Med. 2017;377(26):2545-2554; ³Porter DL, personal communication 2018 Mar 12.

Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

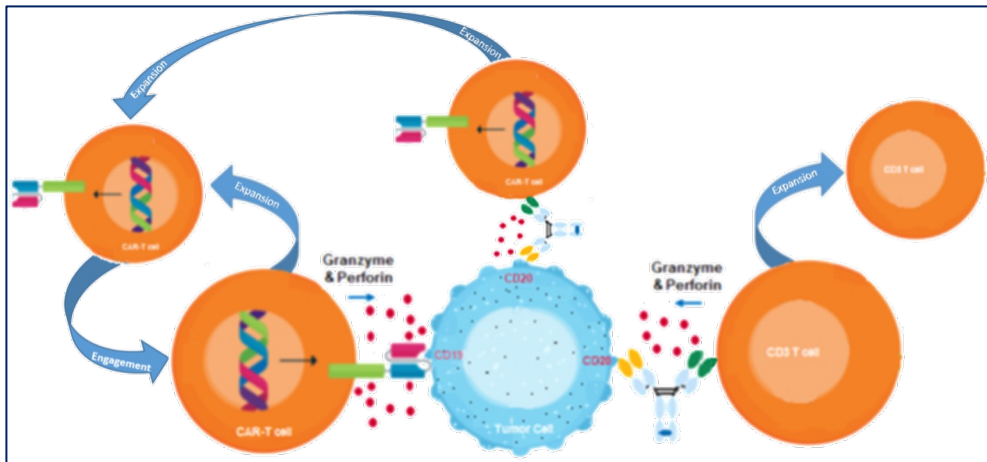
- Recruiting UPenn clinical trial addressing CD19 antigen loss or downregulation

Phase II Study of Dual Targeting of CD19 and CD20 Antigens Using Sequential CD19-directed 4-1BB-CD3 ζ CAR-T Cells Followed by Mosunetuzumab or Glofitamab in Relapsed or Refractory DLBCL or Transformed FL

Rationale:

Early administration of CD20:CD3 bispecific antibodies (mosunetuzumab or glofitamab) after CD19-directed CAR-T cell therapy may enhance tumor cytotoxicity by:

- synergistic or additive B cell cytotoxicity via simultaneously targeting two different B cell (tumor) antigens, *i.e.*, CD19 and CD20
- reducing CD19-negative tumor cell escape by targeting a second B cell antigen
- enhancing *in vivo* expansion of CAR T cells, as observed for T cells in general, after bispecific T cell engaging antibody exposure



ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT04889716	
Recruitment Status ① : Recruiting	
First Posted ① : May 17, 2021	
Study Type ① :	Interventional (Clinical Trial)
Estimated Enrollment ① :	42 participants
Allocation:	Non-Randomized
Intervention Model:	Sequential Assignment
Actual Study Start Date ① :	November 5, 2021
Estimated Primary Completion Date ① :	December 31, 2023
Estimated Study Completion Date ① :	December 31, 2025

PI: E. Chong

Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

• UPenn clinical trial addressing T cell exhaustion

Phase I Trial of huCART19-IL18 Cells in Patients With Relapsed or Refractory CD19+ Cancers

The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Enhanced CAR T-Cell Therapy for Lymphoma after Previous Failure

Jakub Svoboda, M.D.,³ et al.

N Engl J Med 2025;392:1824-35.

DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2408771

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Table 1. Characteristics of the Patients at Baseline.*

Characteristic	Patients (N=21)
Median age (range) — yr	64 (47–74)
Male sex — no. (%)	16 (76)
ECOG performance-status score — no. (%)†	
0	2 (10)
1	19 (90)
Lymphoma subtype — no. (%)	
Large B-cell lymphoma	12 (57)
Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, not otherwise specified	8 (38)
Transformed follicular lymphoma	2 (10)
High-grade B-cell lymphoma	1 (5)
T-cell histiocyte-rich large B-cell lymphoma	1 (5)
Follicular lymphoma	6 (29)
Mantle-cell lymphoma	3 (14)

Previous CAR therapy — no./total no. (%)

CD28-based product	10/20 (50)
Axicabtagene ciloleucel	8/20 (40)
Brexucabtagene autoleucel	2/20 (10)
4-1BB-based product	10/20 (50)
Tisagenlecleucel	8/20 (40)
Lisocabtagene maraleucel	2/20 (10)

Response to previous therapy

Progressive disease — no./total no. (%)	7/20 (35)
Median progression-free survival — mo (90% CI)	6.7 (3.1–10.2)

Rationale

to utilize IL-18 as a pro-inflammatory cytokine to:

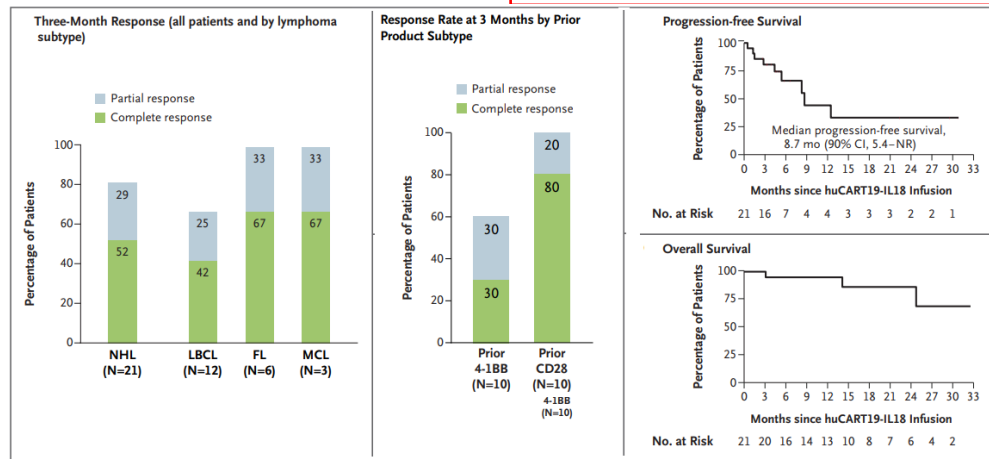
- enhance CAR T cell proliferation
- recruit additional immune cells into the TME to mediate antitumor effects toward CAR-T resistant tumor cells
- mitigate the potential impact of CAR T cell exhaustion

Results

N = 21 received huCART19-IL18

Median follow-up: 17.5 months (range 3 - 34)

- 3-months ORR: 81% (90%CI, 62-93)
- 3-months CRR: 52% (90% CI, 33-71)
- Median DOR: 9.6 months (90% CI, 5.5-NR)



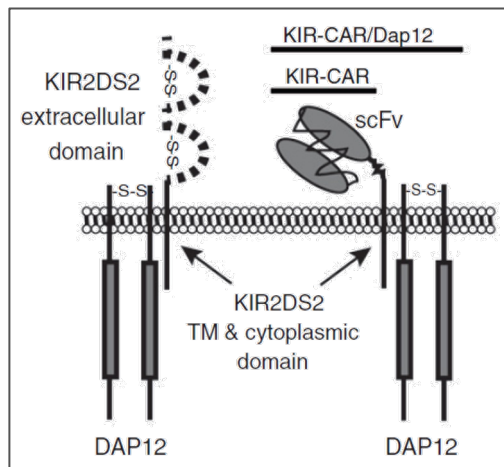
PI: J. Svoboda

Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

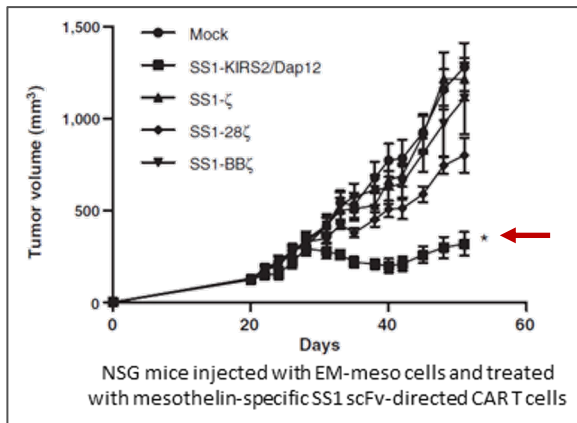
- Recruiting UPenn clinical trial addressing T cell exhaustion or hypofunction

CD19-directed KIR-CAR/DAP12-modified cells for CD19+ lymphomas

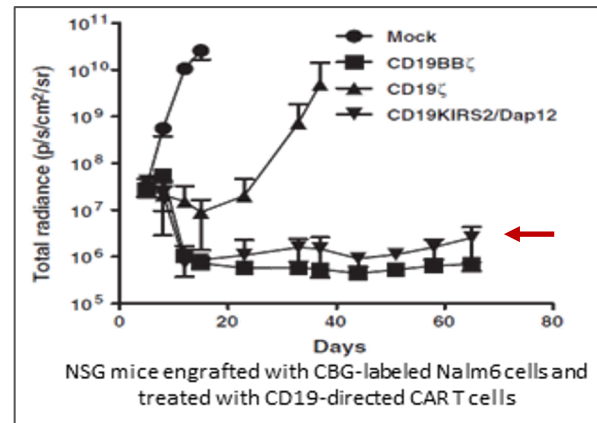
Rationale: KIR-CAR/Dap12 expressing CAR T cells have potent *in vivo* antitumor activity that is resistant to the tumor- and/or TME-induced T-cell hypofunction observed with CD3 ζ -based CAR T cells. This potent activity *may* be of benefit in LBCLs with bulky disease.



Solid tumor model



B-cell tumor model



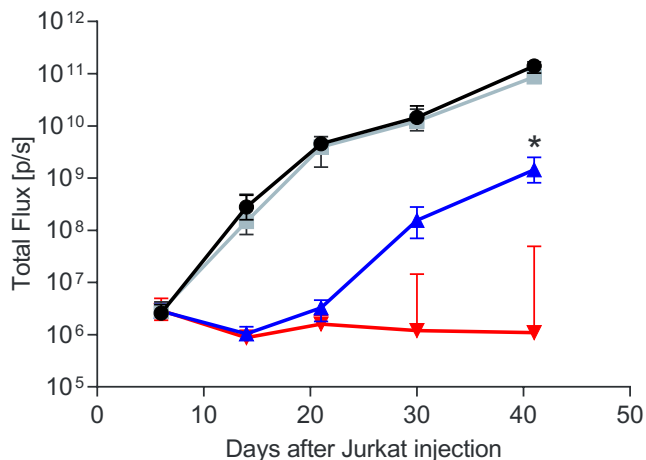
¹Moon, et al. Clin Cancer Res 2014;20:4262–73.

²Wang, et al. Cancer Imm Res 2015;3:815-826. (data show on the right)

Disease-specific determinants of CAR-T success or failure

CD5 KO CAR T cells can enhance efficacy in multiple liquid + solid tumor models

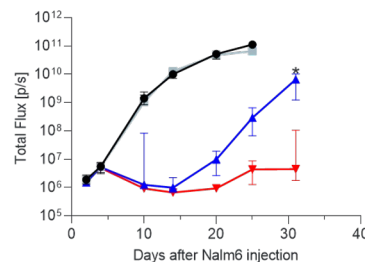
T-cell leukemia or lymphoma
CD5 KO vs Traditional CD5 CAR-T



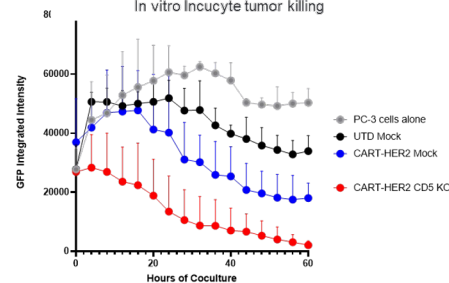
Ruella lab data

Patel RP, ASH, 2022 #662

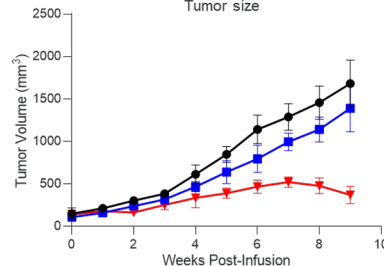
B-CELL LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA
CD5 KO vs Traditional CD19 CAR-T
Tumor burden



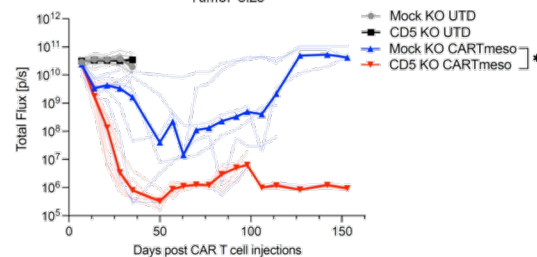
OVARIAN CANCER
CD5 KO vs Traditional HER2 CAR-T
In vitro Incubate tumor killing



HODGKIN LYMPHOMA
CD5 KO vs Traditional CD30 CAR-T
Tumor size



PANCREATIC CANCER
CD5 KO vs Traditional Mesothelin CAR-T
Tumor size



Grazie / Thank You!

