

Professor Jon Wigginton: where we are standing in immunotherapy

Submitted Dec 01, 2013. Accepted for publication Jan 06, 2014.

doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2304-3865.2014.01.01

View this article at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3978/j.issn.2304-3865.2014.01.01>

Prof. Jon Wigginton (*Figure 1*) was previously the Therapeutic Area Head, Immuno-Oncology, Early Clinical Research and Executive Director, Discovery Medicine-Clinical Oncology at Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), where he led the early clinical development of the BMS Immuno-Oncology portfolio including anti-PD-1 and anti-PD-L1. Prior to joining BMS, Dr. Wigginton was the Director of Clinical Oncology at Merck Research Laboratories, where he led early- and late-stage clinical development teams for small molecules and biologics. During his academic career, he held several positions at the National Cancer Institute Center for Cancer Research (NCI-CCR), including Head of Investigational Biologics Section, Pediatric Oncology Branch. Dr. Wigginton is also past president of the International Society for the Biological Therapy of Cancer (now SITC). He is the author of over 50 manuscripts and reviews and is the recipient of multiple awards for scientific accomplishment from sources including the NIH, NCI, USPHS, iSBTe, ISICR, Children's Cancer Foundation, Merck and BMS. Dr. Wigginton received his M.D. and B.S. in Biology, with distinction, from the University of Michigan.

During the 16th Annual Meeting of *Chinese Society of Clinical Oncology (CSCO)* held at Xiamen International Conference Center on October 28, 2013, we are honored to have an interview with Prof. Wigginton (*Figure 1*).

CCO: *In the immunotherapy section, the development of different fields in immunotherapy is discussed. What would be your comments in these developments?*

Prof. Wigginton: I think we have heard about a number of different new modalities and there will be a clinical study at this point. The good news is the reasons to be optimistic that there are multiple forms in making arrangement in new therapies.

There are some new agents as we were discussing in the middle of this morning, the unapproved drugs, which means they have not yet got through definitive tests to prove whether they are effective. Agencies think it is more important for early investigation.

That said, we are still at early stage as doing definitive



Figure 1 Professor Jon Wigginton (first one on the left) was taking the interview.

clinical trials to approve new agents to treat patients.

CCO: *Some of experts express their concern of long memory of the immune cell like T-cells which takes a main role in immunotherapy. What do you think of the concern?*

Prof. Wigginton: The concept of memory as immunological memory is relevantly consecutive in natural and frequent models. What we have not yet shown clearly is the relevance of long memory in the clinical study and how effectively we are in generating and sustaining immunological memory in block way and more importantly, that is the issue of agencies thinking much earlier than understanding immunologic memory.

CCO: *As the vice president of Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer, would you like to introduce the role of the society in the development immunotherapy?*

Prof. Wigginton: The Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC) is a 501 [c][3] non-profit medical professional society of influential scientists, academicians, researchers, clinicians, government representatives, and industry leaders from around the world dedicated to improving cancer

patient outcomes by advancing the science and application of cancer immunotherapy. Currently, SITC are engaged in research and treatment of at least a dozen types of cancer.

Through emphasis on high-caliber scientific meetings, dedication to education and outreach activities, focus on initiatives of major importance to the field, and commitment to collaborations with like-minded organizations and patient advocacy groups, SITC brings together all aspects of the cancer immunology and immunotherapy community in an effort to make cancer immunotherapy one of the four standards of care and the word “cure” a reality for cancer patients living with this disease.

It is the mission of the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer to improve cancer patient outcomes by advancing the science, development and application of cancer immunology and immunotherapy through our core values of interaction/integration, innovation, translation and leadership in the field.

CCO: *What is your expectation of future international collaboration, for example between china and the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer?*

Prof. Wigginton: The CSCO meeting here is a good example of international cooperation. We are thinking about meetings in USA or Europe to continue discussing the similar topics, certainly we will focus on more aspects perhaps on different diseases.

What we are looking closely is, we hope to continue holding big conferences like this to keep that interaction, even providing smaller and one and one small group setting education will be more helpful. It's hard to get people to question and answer as a real dialogue which needs big reception. We always look for opportunity where we can have small groups setting education, to facilitate the exchange of information and education among basic and translational researchers, clinicians, young investigators, societies. Meanwhile, how to ensure the attendance of the high model workers is a challenge.

CCO: *What in your perspective is the biggest challenge in the field?*

Prof. Wigginton: I think the challenge is that cancer immunotherapy as the topic we were talking in this morning is different with what we have done in the field of developing cancer chemotherapy or small molecule

agents and preferentially, it is only been held as increasingly important in recent years.

Also we have to keep in mind that to deliver a new therapy for patient or to start with the brilliant science, it requires people who know how to translate it, clinical investigators who know how to do good trials, pharmaceutical partners who have resources to make that happen. There is no way to get success if we miss anyone of those pieces on the way.

CCO: *Where will you see the future of immunotherapy is going?*

Prof. Wigginton: Yeah, this a great question, and I think that we are talking about translating medium and we are moving from an era where we have to make two things in therapy, trying things to make immunotherapy much better: identifying what improvement targets are and regulating responses into a field where we are getting good drugs and evidence to improve those responses. Based on the international cooperation, there are reasons to be optimistic as we are encountering a lot of opportunity.

CCO: *What is your suggestion for the young oncologists who want to focus on this field?*

Prof. Wigginton: I think for someone who wants to do immunotherapy in oncology, there are two things must be done. One is finding the situations where he could focus on in the area. After all, immunotherapy is an emerging concept that just evolved for decades. The other one is that there is community of basic scientists, physicians, clinicians, where they can get the skills needed. This is crucial for the young investigators to be equipped with necessary skills.

CCO: *Thank you very much for your time for the interview!*

Acknowledgements

Disclosure: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Cite this article as: Li GS. Professor Jon Wigginton: where we are standing in immunotherapy. *Chin Clin Oncol* 2015;4(1):16. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2304-3865.2014.01.01