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Forty Seven collaborates with Merck KGaA on a novel combination for ovarian cancer

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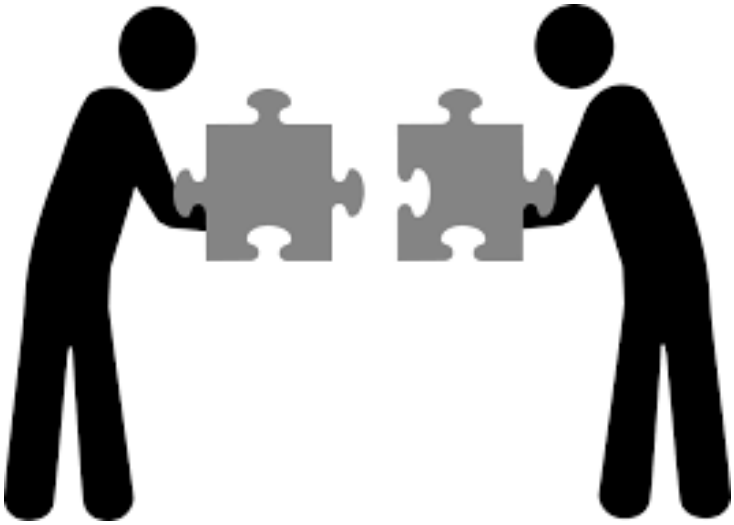
Avelumab is jointly developed by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and Pfizer.



Singapore - Forty Seven, a US based clinical-stage company focused on developing the next generation of transformational immuno-oncology treatments to enable a patient's immune system to defeat their cancer, announced an agreement with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany to conduct a Phase 1b clinical trial combining Hu5F9-G4 with avelumab in patients with ovarian cancer.

PD-L1 and CD47 are immunosuppressant molecules overexpressed on cancer cells that send inhibitory signals to T cells and macrophages, respectively. Binding of avelumab to PD-L1 takes the brakes off T cells and, in a similar way, binding of Hu5F9-G4 to CD47 takes the brakes off macrophages.

"PD-L1 inhibitors, like avelumab, belong to a class of new immunological therapies for cancer known as checkpoint inhibitors that offer the opportunity for long-term remissions in some cancer patients," said Forty Seven's CMO Chris Takimoto. "Not all patients however, respond to checkpoint inhibitors, so additional scientifically driven combination approaches are required."

"Ovarian cancer patients have limited treatment options, especially as they are often diagnosed at a late stage in their disease," says Dr. Alise Reicin, Head of Global Clinical Development at the Biopharma business of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, which in the US and Canada operates as EMD Serono. "We have two ongoing registrational studies exploring the role that avelumab could play both as a monotherapy and in combinations in ovarian cancer. This collaboration enhances our strategic approach to novel I-O combinations in this disease setting. We are hopeful that through these efforts we will discover viable options to help patients with this hard-to-treat cancer."

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