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Singapore finds biomarkers to predict primary liver cancer patients' response to immunotherapy

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Biomarkers are increasingly being used to predict, diagnose and monitor cancer, allowing a more personalised medicine treatment approach



A research team from Singapore has identified novel biomarkers that not only predict a patient's response to immunotherapy, but also the adverse events they may experience from the same immunotherapy used to treat primary liver cancer hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). These findings should enable more effective and individualised treatment of HCC patients, with fewer side effects.

Using a personalised medicine approach, a team of researchers and clinicians from the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and SingHealth's Translational Immunology Institute (TII) uncovered mechanisms of response and adverse events from the type of immunotherapy known as immune checkpoint blockade used to treat HCC patients.

"We are excited that our findings have presented a novel treatment pathway, and are now exploring this combination and aim to bring this new therapy to patients with primary liver cancer," said Clinical Associate Professor David Tai, Senior Consultant, Division of Medical Oncology, NCCS and co-senior author of this study.

Liver cancer is highly prevalent in Asian populations, especially in Southeast Asia, China, Korea and Japan. In Singapore, it is the fourth most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer mortality for men. With the high incidence of this disease in the region, finding effective treatments for HCC is an urgent need.