

My Journey Part 2 – Bulletin No 9 (16 October 2020)

The Past Three Weeks

Life has continued on as though there no issues confronting me. The problem with the numbness and tingling in the left side of my scalp, head and neck (peripheral neuropathy) has been put to one side as now I am taking medication which has allowed me to get on with life. As long as you are kept busy, which I am with the many activities that I am involved with one trends to forget any health issues which may impact upon your well being.

Appointment with Dr Rahul Ladwa

On Wednesday 14 October I had an appointment with Dr Ladwa at the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) in Brisbane. Following several interviews and health checks I had a long interview with Dr Ladwa. Dr Ladwa is the principal research chemo oncologist who is undertaking a trial with the University of Queensland's, Dr Ian Fraser to ascertain as to whether a trial agent combined with a proven immunotherapy drug may produce a better outcome for head and neck cancer patients who are battling the cancer for a second time. At the moment I have primary cancer present in my throat and the secondary cancer which has spread from the primary and is located in the upper left neck area. Below are extracts from the trial.

Trial Title A Phase Ib, single centre, open label study of a therapeutic Human Papillomavirus (HPV) DNA vaccine co-administered with anti-PD-L1 immunotherapy, Durvalumab (MEDI4736), for recurrent and/or metastatic HPV-related head and neck cancer.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY? *The purpose of this research project is to test whether it is safe to administer a new vaccine (AMV002) in combination with an immunotherapy drug called Durvalumab (MEDI4736) in patients with HPV-related cancer of the tonsil or base of tongue where the cancer has either returned after treatment (recurrent) or spread to other parts of the body (metastases) and now considered incurable.*

The new vaccine (AMV002) is aimed at promoting the body's own immune system to develop antibodies that attack cancer cells that have been infected by the human papillomavirus. Durvalumab is an immunotherapy drug, and has been used in the treatment of several other cancer types and aims to overcome the cancer's ability to dampen down the body's immune response to the cancer itself.

If the study shows that it is safe to administer both drugs at the same time, and blood tests reveal that the vaccine can lead to the production of the antibodies to help fight the cancer, then this combination will be tested in larger human trials to confirm its benefit. Ultimately this approach may become the standard way in which we treat this type of cancer and may form the basis for the treatment of other cancer types.

The Outcome

As a result of my meeting with Dr Ladwa I have signed up for the trial and further participation is dependent on the results of blood test and scans which I have to undergo at the PAH.

The Future

I now await a call from Dr Rahul in the hope I will be assessed as a suitable patient for the PAH cancer trial. I am very confident that I will be accepted and will commence the trial within two weeks.

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life

Neil Raward

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