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Optimizing Solid Tumor Care: The Role of Biomarkers in Clinical Pathways

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Disclosures

- **Manish A. Shah, MD FASCO:** Consultant – JAZZ Pharmaceutical, Revolution Medicine; research/grant support – Bristol Meyers Squibb, MERCK, Oncolys Biopharma

Learning Objectives

- Describe evolving evidence-based guidelines for comprehensive biomarker testing across solid tumors and their implications for precision oncology and clinical pathways
- Integrate genetic testing, pathology, biomarkers (diagnostic, prognostic, predictive), and imaging into multidisciplinary care pathways for solid tumors—prioritizing accessibility across all practice settings, especially in community and rural areas
- Foster multidisciplinary collaboration to standardize biomarker use in clinical pathways throughout all stages of disease, ensuring equitable access and personalized treatment strategies in patients diagnosed with solid tumors

The Role of Biomarkers and Precision Medicine in Solid Tumor Care

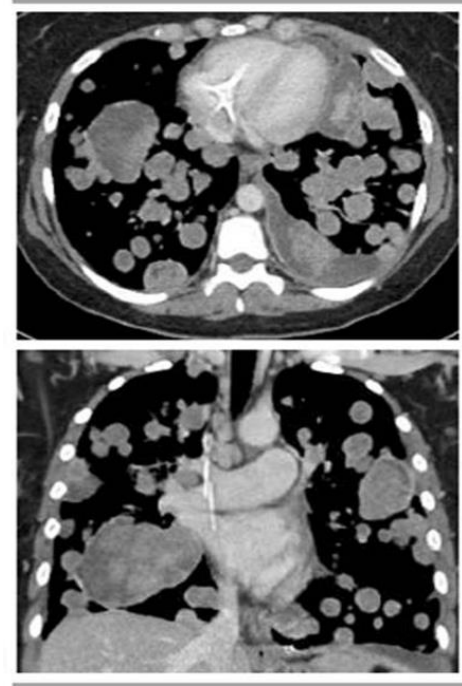


Case Study

- A 42-year-old woman with an undifferentiated pleomorphic sarcoma presents for consultation
- She is a banker, but hasn't worked for the past 6 months
- She has shortness of breath, and progressive weakness
- Her prior treatment has been
 - (1) Epirubicin, ifosfamide, and doxorubicin, and
 - (2) Sorafenib

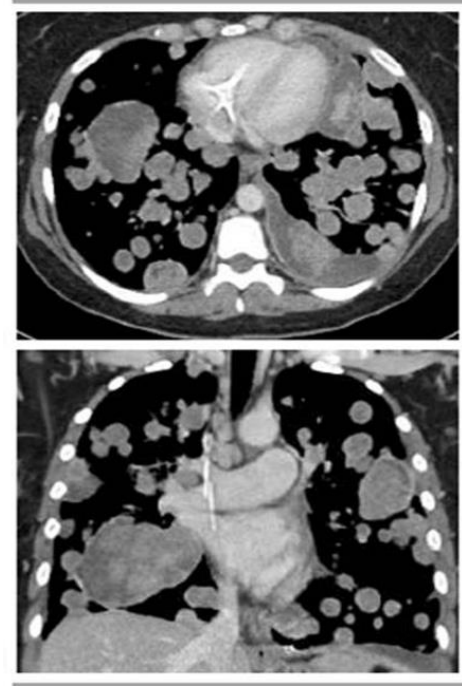
Case Study

- You review her records and order imaging
- It shows her lungs are nearly replaced with large bilobar lung lesions



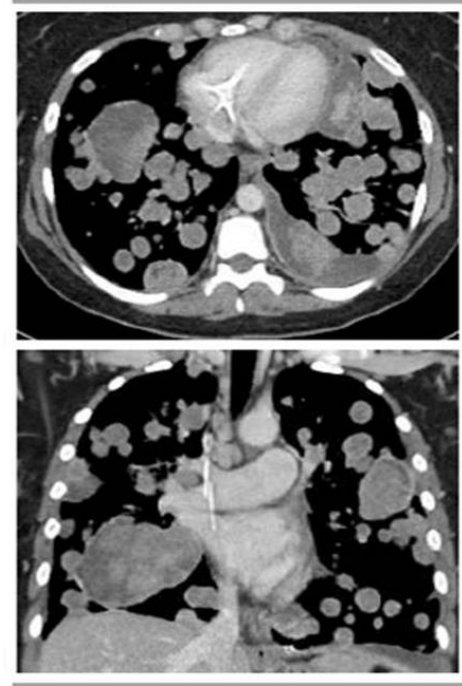
Case Study

- You review her records and order imaging
- It shows her lungs are nearly replaced with large bilobar lung lesions
- She is referred to precision oncology and undergoes tumor sequencing
 - What are the platforms?
 - What are you looking for?



Case Study

- Tumor sequencing reveals a LMNA-NTRK1 fusion!
- Why is this biomarker important?



Overview of Biomarker-Directed Therapy

- Precision medicine has rapidly evolved over the last 25 years
- Over 100 FDA-approved drugs require biomarker testing
- Understanding biomarker testing platforms and limitations is critical to appropriate application of novel therapeutics
- Prognostic vs predictive?
 - Are they mutually exclusive?

Prognostic vs Predictive

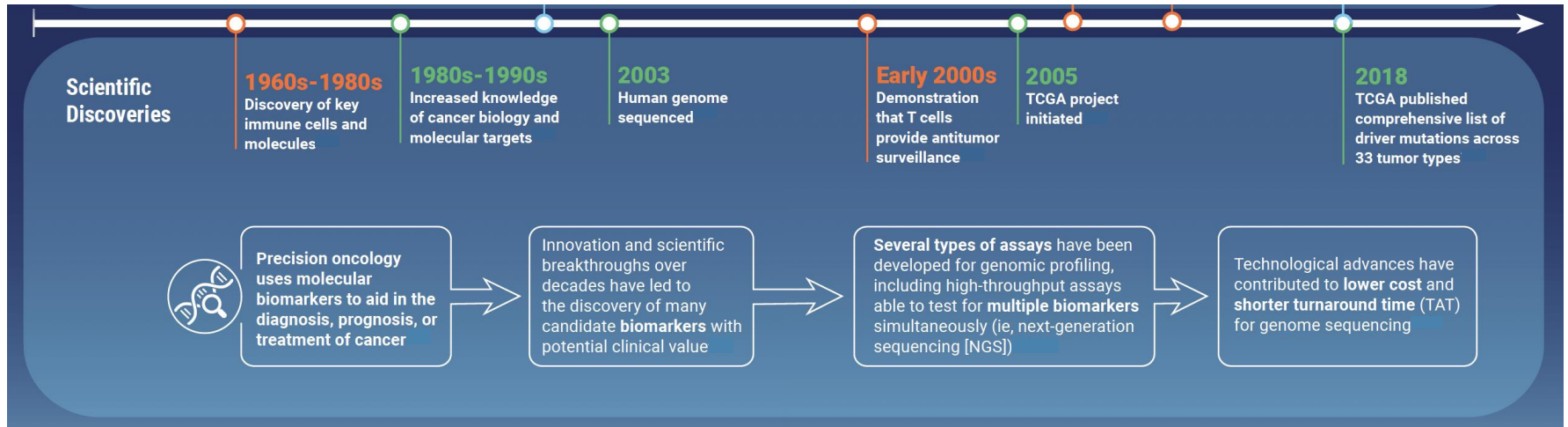
- Prognostic biomarker → disease related
 - Course of the disease irrespective of the treatment
 - Liver cancers with a high AFP → poor survival
- Predictive biomarker → drug related
 - Tells you the likelihood of a treatment working
 - Trastuzumab works better in tumors that are HER2 IHC 3+



AFP = alpha-fetoprotein; IHC = immunohistochemistry.

FDA-NIH Biomarker Working Group. BEST (Biomarkers, EndpointS, and other Tools) Resource [Internet]. Accessed September 2, 2025. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK402284/>.

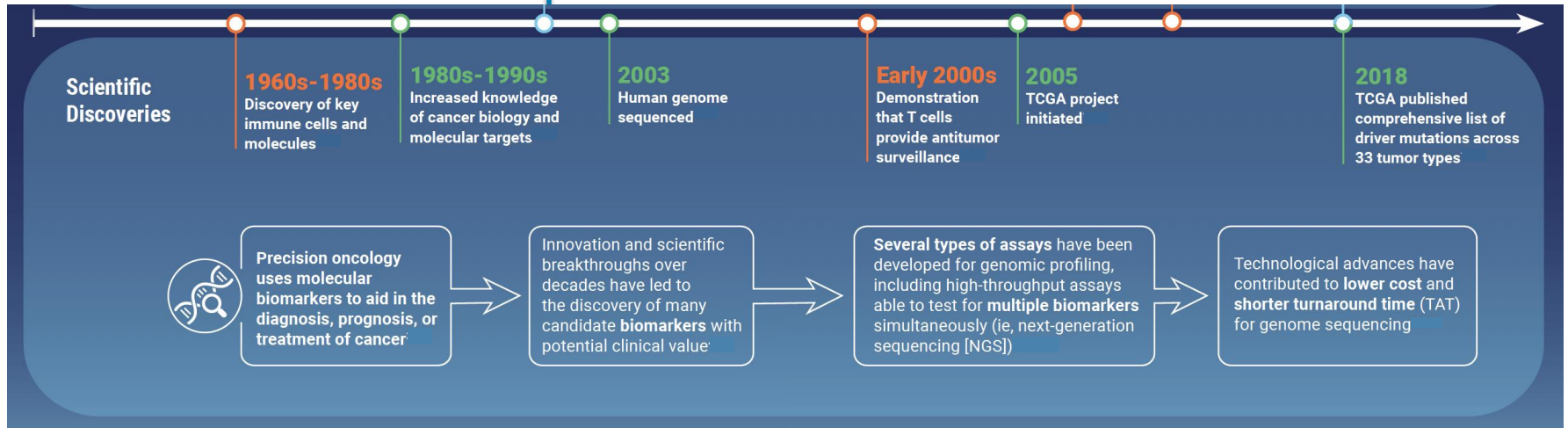
Progress in Precision Oncology Has Accelerated!



Progress in Precision Oncology Has Accelerated!

But it is not a new concept

Trastuzumab approved for BC in 1998



BC = breast cancer.

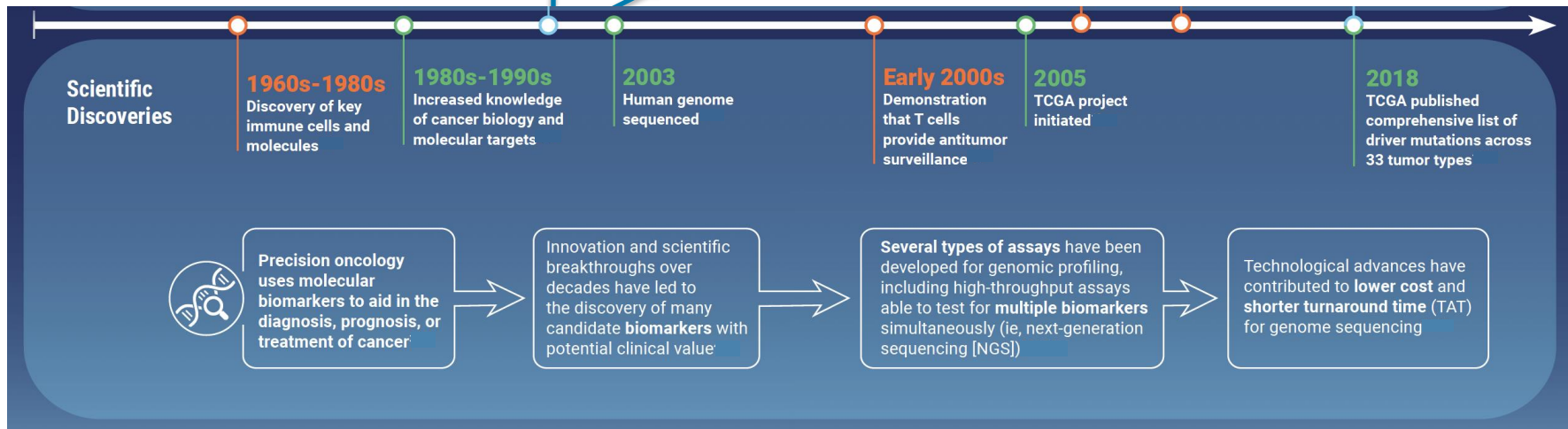
Dawood S, et al. *J Clin Oncol.* 2010;28(1):92-98. Precision Medicine. *Molecular Diagnostics in Personalized Cancer Care.* Novartis; 2022.

Progress in Precision Oncology Has Accelerated!

But it is not a new concept

Trastuzumab approved for BC in 1998

Imatinib approved for GIST in 2002



GIST = gastrointestinal stromal tumor.

Dagher R, et al. *Clin Cancer Res.* 2002;8(10):3034-3038. Precision Medicine. *Molecular Diagnostics in Personalized Cancer Care.* Novartis; 2022.

NTRK Fusions: One of the Few Tissue Agnostic Targets in Precision Oncology

Role of TRK in normal biology and cancer

Neurotrophin family of receptors

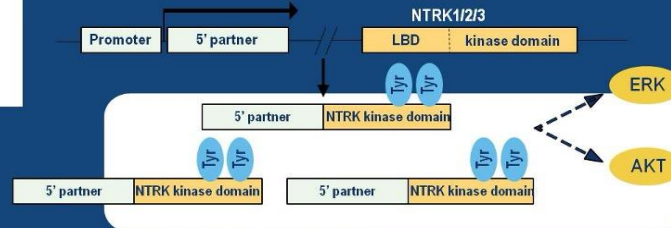
TRKA (*NTRK1*) → Pain, thermoregulation

TRKB (*NTRK2*) → Movement, memory, mood, appetite, body weight

TRKC (*NTRK3*) → Proprioception

TRK fusions

- Ligand binding domain (LBD) replaced by 5' fusion partner
- Drives overexpression and ligand-independent activation



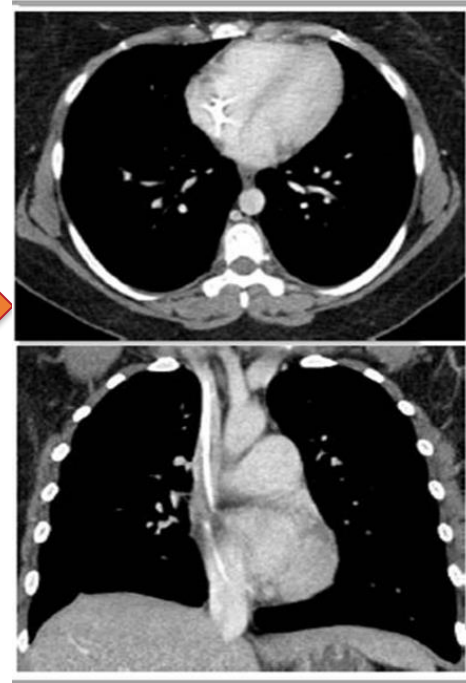
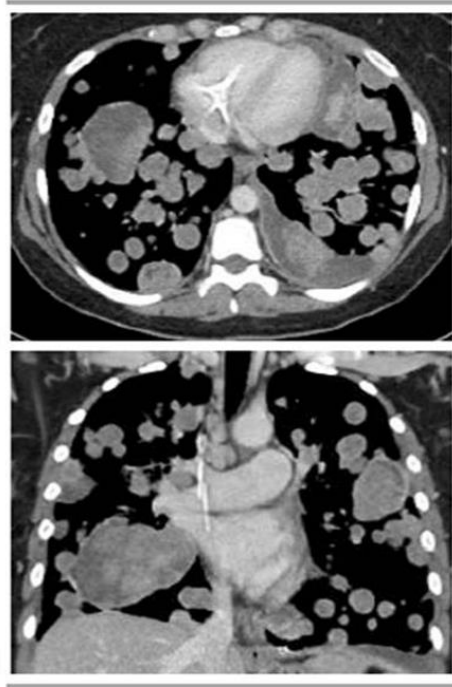
TRK uncommonly expressed in normal tissues or cancer
Fusion drives abnormally high expression and activation of TRK kinase domain

Targeting NTRK

- **Larotrectinib**
 - Approved in 2018 for adult and pediatric patients with solid tumors that harbor an NTRK gene fusion
 - Initial study of 55 patients
 - Objective response rate of 75%
- **Entrectinib**
 - Approved in 2019 for adult and pediatric patients above the age of 12 with solid tumors that harbor an NTRK fusion
 - Initial study of 54 patients
 - Objective response rate of 57%

Case Study

- Tumor sequencing reveals a LMNA-NTRK1 fusion!
- Why is this biomarker important?
- The patient received larotrectinib. 6 months later, you see the improvement in her lung metastases



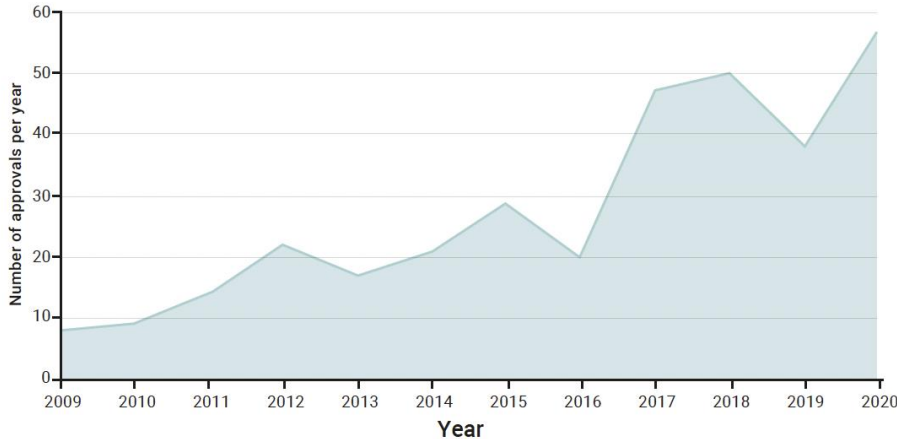
Precision Medicine

- Initial successes in the late 1990s and early 2000s
 - ... *it's relatively new*
- There has been a revolution in sequencing technology
- More and more drugs are available based on biomarkers discovered in the lab
- Successfully targeting a biomarker with precision oncology can change someone's life

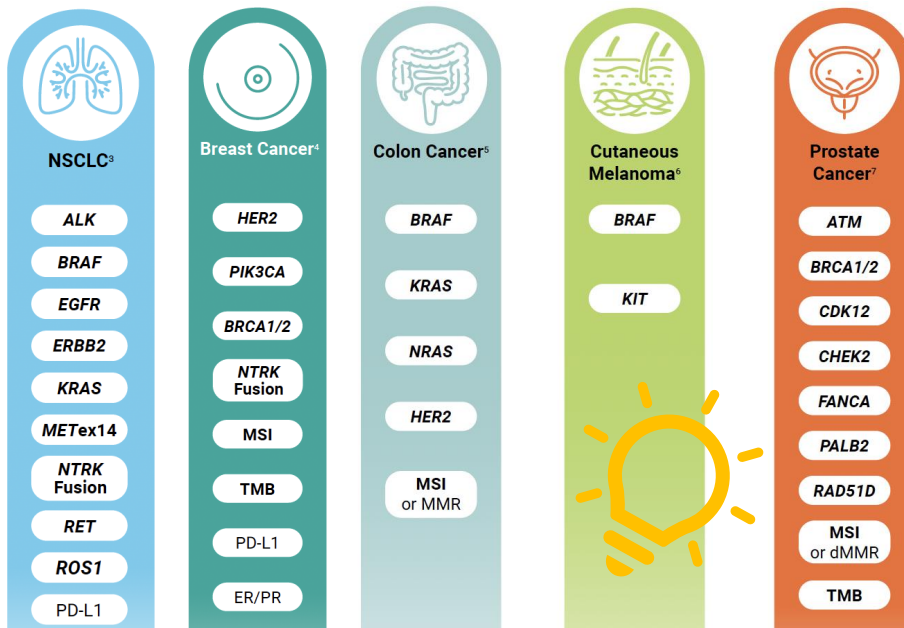
Accelerated Development of Precision Medicine

- Of the 332 approvals
 - >70 require biomarker testing
 - Over 28 cancer types

New Cancer Therapies 2009-2020



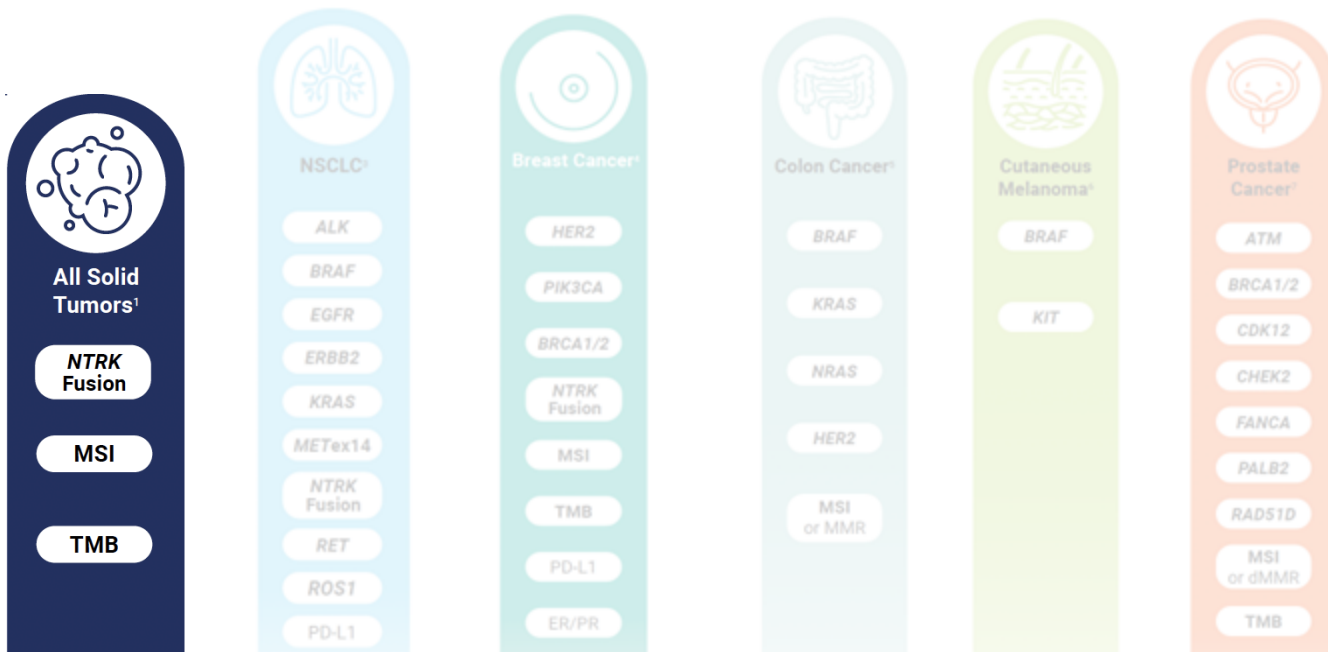
Tumor-Specific Targets



NSCLC = non-small cell lung cancer.

Chakravarty D, et al. *J Clin Oncol.* 2022;40(11):1231-1258. Siegel RL, et al. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2023;73(1):17-48. Referenced from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN®) Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines®) for Breast Cancer V.4.2025, NSCLC V.8.2025, Colon Cancer V.4.2025, Prostate Cancer V.2.2025, Melanoma: Cutaneous V.2.2025, © National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Inc. 2025. All rights reserved. Accessed August 18, 2025. To view the most recent and complete version of the guidelines, go online to [NCCN.org](https://www.nccn.org). NCCN makes no warranties of any kind whatsoever regarding their content, use, or application, and disclaims any responsibility for their application or use in any way.

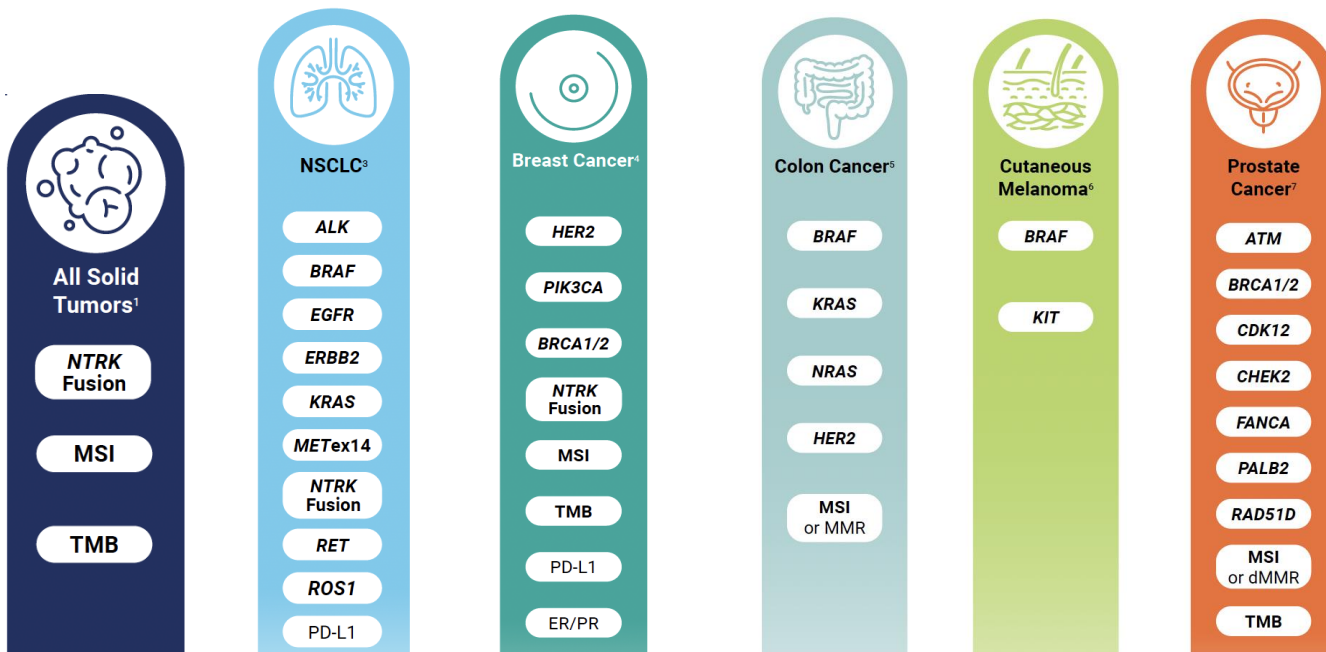
Tumor-Agnostic Targets



MSI = microsatellite instability-high; TMB = tumor mutation burden.

Chakravarty D, et al. *J Clin Oncol.* 2022;40(11):1231-1258. Referenced from the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines®) for Breast Cancer V.4.2025, NSCLC V.8.2025, Colon Cancer V.4.2025, Prostate Cancer V.2.2025, Melanoma: Cutaneous V.2.2025, © National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Inc.2025. All rights reserved. Accessed August 18, 2025. To view the most recent and complete version of the guidelines, go online to [NCCN.org](https://www.nccn.org).

NCCN Guidelines: Understanding Biomarkers Critical across Solid Tumors



Growing Number of Guideline-Recommended Biomarkers in Multiple Cancer Types

Cancer Type	Targetable Alterations																									
	EGFR mt	ALK fusion	ROS1 fusion	BRAF mt	ERBB2 (HER2) amp	ERBB2 (HER2) mt	RET fusion	RET mt	MET amp & ex 14 skip	NTRK fusion	MSI high	BRCA1/2 g	BRCA1/2 somatic	KRAS mt exons 2,3,4	NRAS mt exons 2,3,4	NRAS mt	PIK3CA mt	KIT mt	PALB2	NRG1*	PDGFRA mt	FGFR3 mt	FGFR2/3 fusions	AR mt	IDH1 mt	
NSCLC [†]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorectal [†]				✓	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓											
Breast [†]					✓					✓	✓	✓					✓									
Pancreatic [†]	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓					
Prostate [†]											✓	✓	✓							✓						
Ovarian										✓	✓	✓	✓													
Endometrial					✓					✓	✓									✓						
Esophageal					✓					✓	✓															
Esophagogastric [†]					✓					✓	✓															
Gastric [†]					✓					✓	✓															
Cervical										✓	✓															
Cholangiocarcinoma				✓						✓	✓												✓			✓
Melanoma [†]	✓	✓	✓							✓							✓		✓							
GIST				✓						✓												✓				
Head & Neck					✓					✓																
Bladder																							✓	✓		✓
Thyroid				✓				✓		✓																
Small bowel										✓	✓															

- ASCO recommendation as of February 2022

- Multigene panel-based genomic testing should be used whenever more than one genomic biomarker is linked to a regulatory agency-approved therapy

- †NCCN guidelines suggest that liquid biopsy may be considered for these cancer types under certain conditions, such as when patients are unable to undergo a traditional biopsy or tissue is insufficient for complete testing, upon relapse or progression depending



FDA Targeted Therapy Approvals: Immunotherapy (July 2024 – June 2025)

Target	Drug	Disease Indication (succinct)	Year
PD-1	Dostarlimab-gxly	Primary advanced or recurrent endometrial cancer with chemotherapy (1L)	2024
PD-1	Pembrolizumab + pemetrexed + platinum chemotherapy	Metastatic malignant pleural mesothelioma (1L)	2024
PD-1 + CTLA-4	Nivolumab + ipilimumab	Metastatic hepatocellular carcinoma (1L)	2025
PD-1	Penpulimab-kcqx	Recurrent or metastatic non-keratinizing nasopharyngeal carcinoma (1L)	2025
PD-1	Retifanlimab-dlwr ± carboplatin + paclitaxel	Squamous cell carcinoma of the anal canal (1L combo; single agent after platinum)	2025
PD-1	Pembrolizumab (perioperative regimen)	Neoadjuvant + adjuvant therapy for resectable HNSCC (PD-L1 positive)	2025



HNSCC = head and neck squamous cell carcinoma.

Drugs@FDA: FDA-Approved Drugs. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-expands-endometrial-cancer-indication-dostarlimab-gxly-chemotherapy>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-nivolumab-ipilimumab-unresectable-or-metastatic-hepatocellular-carcinoma>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-penpulimab-kcqx-non-keratinizing-nasopharyngeal-carcinoma>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-retifanlimab-dlwr-carboplatin-and-paclitaxel-and-single-agent-squamous-cell-carcinoma>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-darolutamide-metastatic-castration-sensitive-prostate-cancer>.

FDA Targeted Therapy Approvals: TKIs/ ADCs (July 2024 – June 2025)

Target	Drug	Disease Indication (succinct)	Year
EGFR/MET (bispecific)	Amivantamab-vmjw + carboplatin + pemetrexed	Metastatic NSCLC with EGFR exon 19 del or L858R after EGFR TKI	2024
EGFR	Osimertinib	Unresectable stage III EGFRm NSCLC following chemoradiation (no progression)	2024
RET	Selpercatinib	Advanced/metastatic medullary thyroid cancer with RET mutation (adult & pediatric ≥2y)	2024
PI3Kα	Inavolisib + palbociclib + fulvestrant	Endocrine-resistant, PIK3CA-mutated HR+, HER2– locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer	2024
CLDN18.2	Zolbetuximab-clzb + fluoropyrimidine + platinum	First-line HER2–, CLDN18.2+ gastric/GEJ adenocarcinoma	2024

TKI = tyrosine kinase inhibitor; ADC = antibody–drug conjugates.

FDA. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-amivantamab-vmjw-carboplatin-and-pemetrexed-non-small-cell-lung-cancer-egfr-exon-19>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-osimertinib-locally-advanced-unresectable-stage-iii-non-small-cell-lung-cancer>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-selpercatinib-medullary-thyroid-cancer-ret-mutation>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-inavolisib-palbociclib-and-fulvestrant-endocrine-resistant-pik3ca-mutated-hr-positive>; <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-information-approved-drugs/fda-approves-zolbetuximab-clzb-chemotherapy-gastric-or-gastroesophageal-junction-adenocarcinoma>

FDA Targeted Therapy Approvals: TKIs/ ADCs (July 2024 – June 2025)

Target	Drug	Disease Indication (succinct)	Year
KRAS G12C + EGFR	Sotorasib + panitumumab	KRAS G12C-mutated metastatic colorectal cancer after prior therapy	2025
RAF/MEK clamp + FAK inhibitor	Avutometinib + defactinib	KRAS-mutated recurrent low-grade serous ovarian cancer after prior therapy (accelerated)	2025
c-Met (ADC)	Telisotuzumab vedotin-tllv	NSCLC, non-squamous with high c-Met protein overexpression (after prior systemic therapy)	2025
HIF-2 α	Belzutifan	Pheochromocytoma or paraganglioma ($\geq 12y$), unresectable, locally advanced or metastatic	2025
ROS1	Taletrectinib	Locally advanced or metastatic ROS1-positive NSCLC (adults)	2025

Key Learning Points

- Biomarkers can be prognostic (ie. good vs bad outcome)
- Biomarkers can be predictive (ie. selection for drug) – this is the main topic today

- Biomarker testing for precision oncology is still relatively new
- Pace of drug development based on biomarkers is nearly exponential
- It will be nearly impossible to keep up and provide state-of-the-art care

- NCCN: Liquid biopsy is an option for certain cancer types if patient unable to undergo a traditional biopsy or tissue is insufficient for complete testing
- ASCO: Multigene panel-based genomic testing is suggested if more than one genomic biomarker is linked to an agency-approved therapy

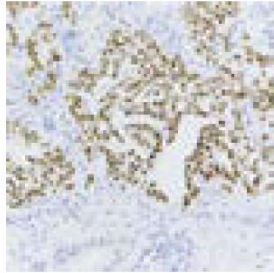


Biomarker Testing Methods

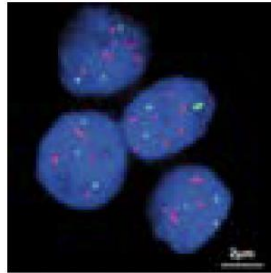


Precision Oncology Methods

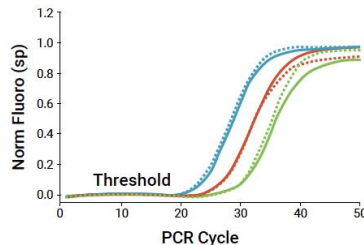
IHC



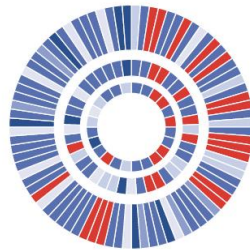
FISH



RT-PCR



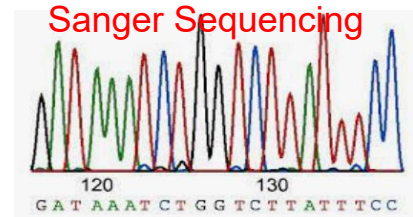
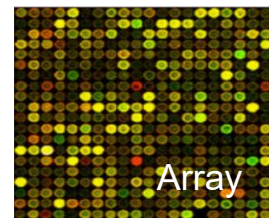
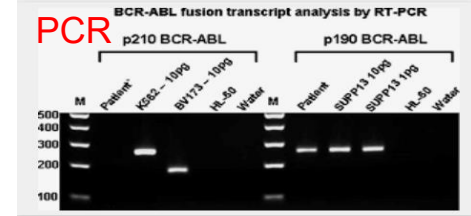
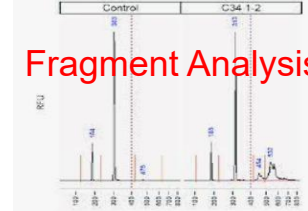
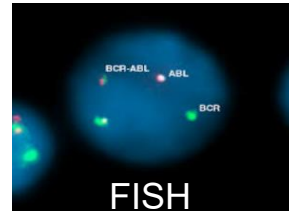
NGS





- Biomarker testing
 - No one platform is perfect for every test
 - Knowledge of the limits and expectations of the different platforms is critical

Biomarker Testing Techniques in NSCLC

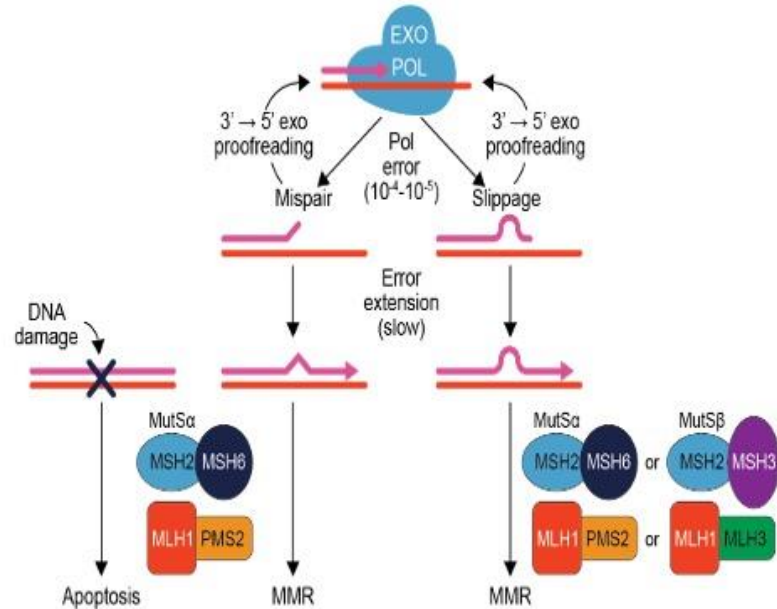
		ACTIONABLE BIOMARKERS							EMERGING BIOMARKERS				
		EGFR	ALK	ROS1	BRAF	RET	NTRK 1/2/3	MET _{ex14}	KRAS	PD-L1	TMB	MET _{amp}	HER2
NCCN Recommended		PCR R NG S	FISH IHC NGS	FISH IHC NGS	PCR R NG S	FISH IHC NGS	FISH IHC NGS	NG S	PCR R NG S	IHC	NG S	FISH NGS	PCR NGS



Biomarker Testing

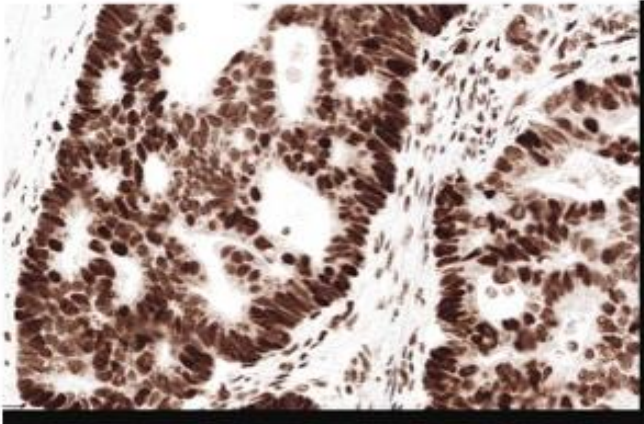
- Some biomarkers can have multiple testing strategies
- For example,
 - *ALK, ROS, EGFR* (for lung cancer)  NGS sequencing, FISH, IHC
 - Mismatch repair for immunotherapy  IHC, PCR

Mismatch Repair: A Biomarker for Immunotherapy

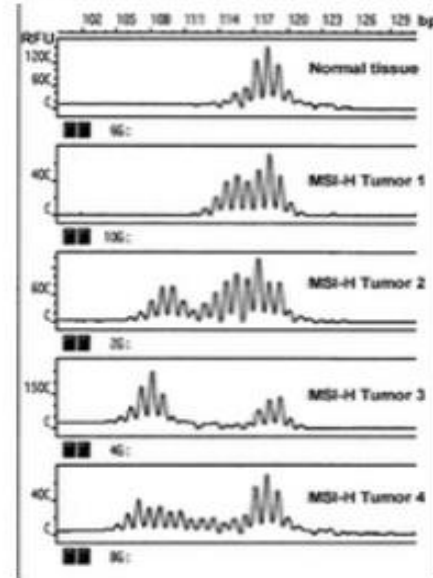


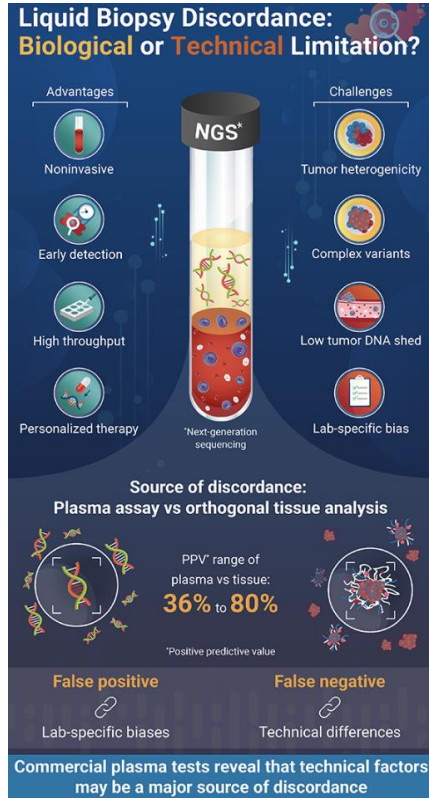
Mismatch Repair Testing Strategies

Immunohistochemistry



Microsatellite Instability





Liquid Biopsy

- Identify circulating tumor DNA
 - Tumor specific mutations
 - Tumor heterogeneity
 - Both prognostic and predictive
- Identify circulating tumor cells
 - Prognostic for survival (breast, colon, prostate)
 - Predictive of response (ER resistance, breast)
 - Predictive of response (AR, prostate)
- False positives/ negatives?
- Tumor shedding varies



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Integrating/Refining Biomarker Testing in Clinical Pathways



Biomarker Testing: Multistep Process



Patient's
genome



Sample
(i.e.,
biomarker)



Genome
sequencing/
testing
(i.e., NGS)



Genome
analysis



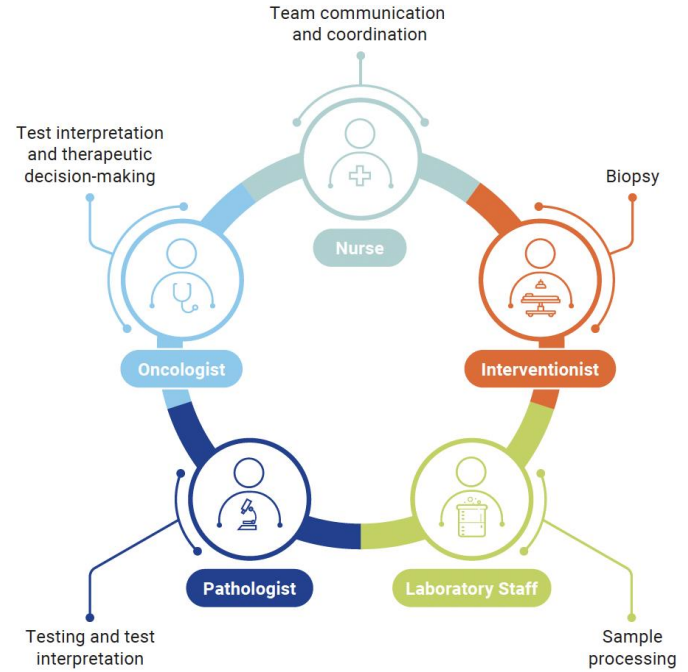
Pharmacogenetic
interpretation



Precision
medicine
application
(diagnostic,
treatment,
prediction,
prevention)

Biomarker Testing: Multistep Process

- Not as simple as ordering a blood test
- Requires a team
- Need to understand what tissue/ how much/ what type of biopsy, etc.



Economic Considerations

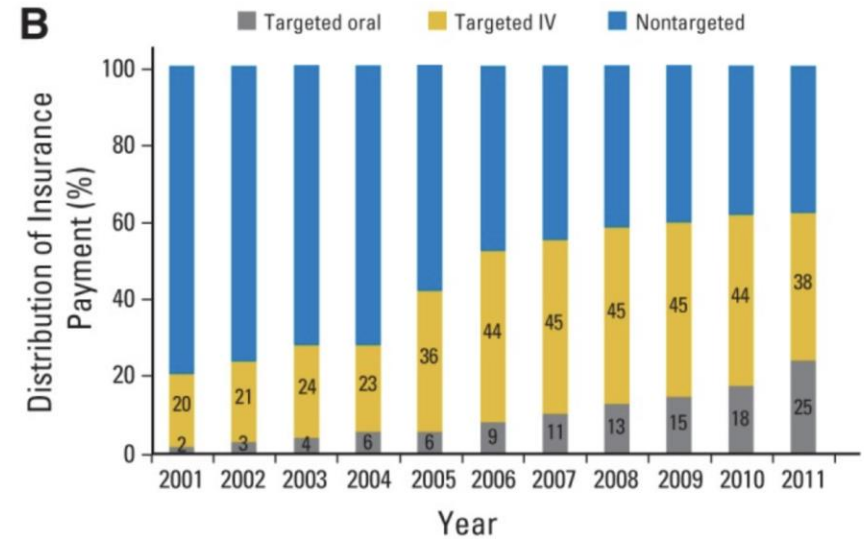
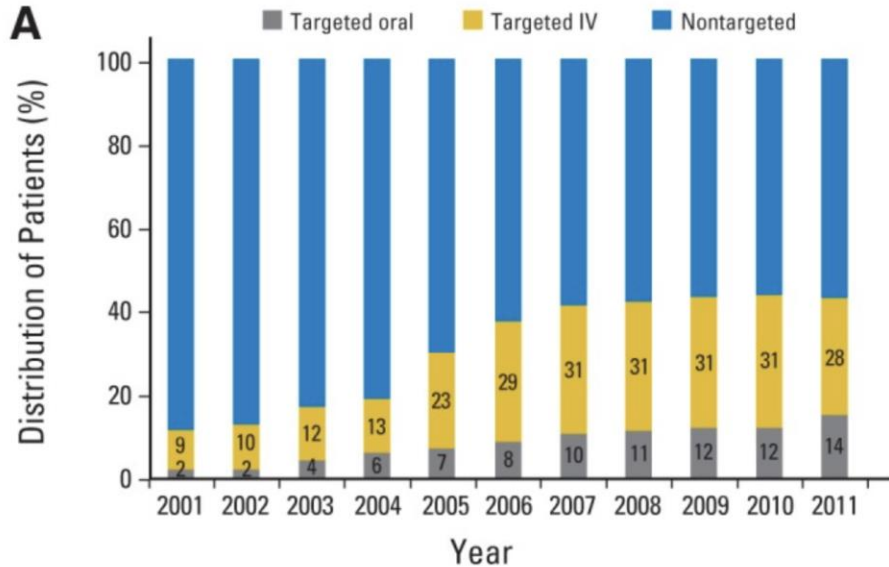
- Costs are expected to increase exponentially!
- Precision oncology means that we select the right drug for the right target
- Most targets are rare – so few patients will receive the drug

Economic Considerations

- Costs are expected to increase exponentially!
- Drug development costs increase
 - Biomarker validation
 - Increasingly rare population
 - Longer time to identify and enroll patients
 - Approvals require companion diagnostic testing
 - Assay validation and incorporation across pathology labs

Economic Considerations

- Costs of targeted therapy disproportionately increase



Case Study: HER2 Targeted Therapy

- Trastuzumab was approved in 1998 for the treatment of HER2 positive breast cancer

Case Study: HER2 Targeted Therapy

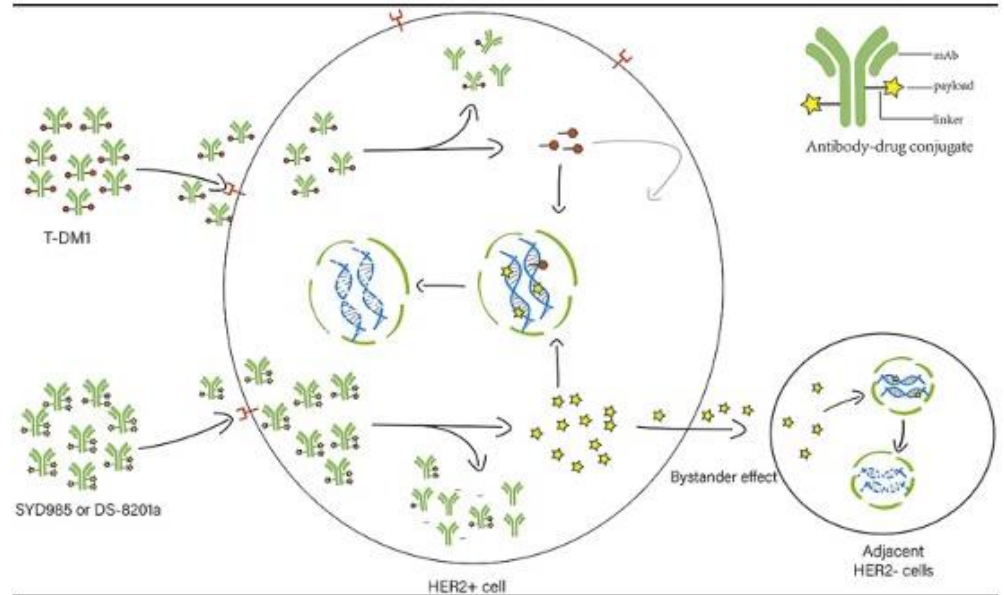
- Trastuzumab was approved in 1998 for the treatment of HER2 positive breast cancer
- 2010: Trastuzumab was approved for HER2 positive gastric cancer based on the ToGA trial

Case Study: HER2 Targeted Therapy

- Trastuzumab was approved in 1998 for the treatment of HER2 positive breast cancer
- 2010: Trastuzumab was approved for HER2 positive gastric cancer based on the ToGA trial
- 2011-2018: Drugs that target HER2 and are APPROVED in breast cancer were examined in HER2 positive gastric cancer
 - JACOB: Capecitabine/cisplatin/trastuzumab +/- pertuzumab (N = 780)
 - HELOISE: Capecitabine/cisplatin + 2 dose levels of trastuzumab (N = 400)
 - GATSBY: Paclitaxel vs T-DM1 (N = 412)

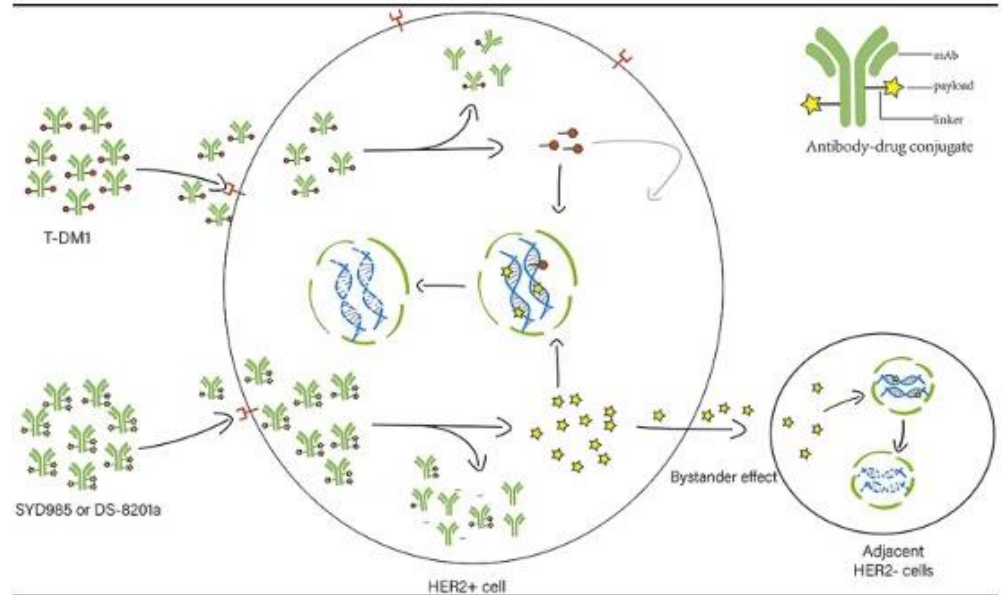
Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

- Next generation drug targeting the same target
- Antibody drug conjugate
- Issues to consider
 - Linker between the payload and the Ab
 - DAR (drug to Ab ratio)



Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

- Next generation drug targeting the same target
- Antibody drug conjugate
- Extends the approval of targeting HER2 in breast cancer
- Approved in gastric cancer
- Other GI cancers



Regulatory/Quality Considerations

- Emergence and evolving field of precision medicine require novel policy framework that balances the needs of patients, industry, and science without impeding progress or limiting access
- Recent tumor agnostic FDA approvals



Regulatory/Quality Considerations

- FDA leads the way for regulatory aspects
 - 1996: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) ensures that personal medical information stored, accessed, or processed adheres to privacy guidelines
 - 2015: PrecisionFDA was introduced – a cloud-based site for community research and development
 - 2020: FDA issued several guidance documents on manufacturing and clinical development of gene and cell-based therapeutic products
 - 2021: FDA updated guidelines on new products, like the development of antisense oligonucleotides

Novel Adaptive Design for Precision Oncology

- FDA Project Optimus --> use of patient data to improve toxicity assessment
- Utilize patient reported outcomes (PRO) within oncology trials
 - Could streamline drug development
 - Could reduce costs

Novel Adaptive Design for Precision Oncology

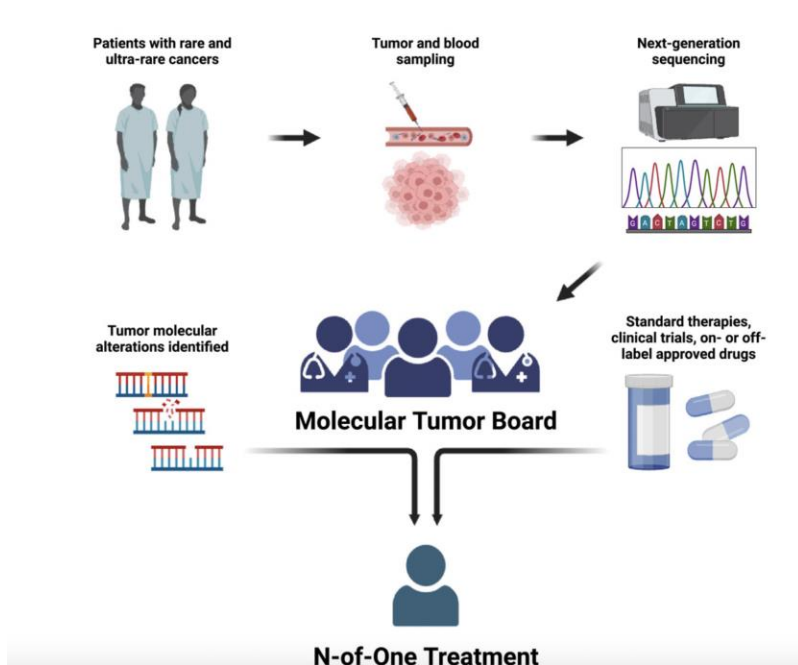
- FDA Project Optimus --> use of patient data to improve toxicity assessment
- Utilize patient reported outcomes (PRO) within oncology trials
 - Could streamline drug development
 - Could reduce costs
 - Requires the development of new reporting measures and metrics
 - PROM = PRO-Measure
 - PRO-CTCAE = PRO-Common Toxicity Criteria for Adverse Events
 - Patients report symptomatic toxicities via a questionnaire

Molecular Tumor Boards



Molecular Tumor Boards

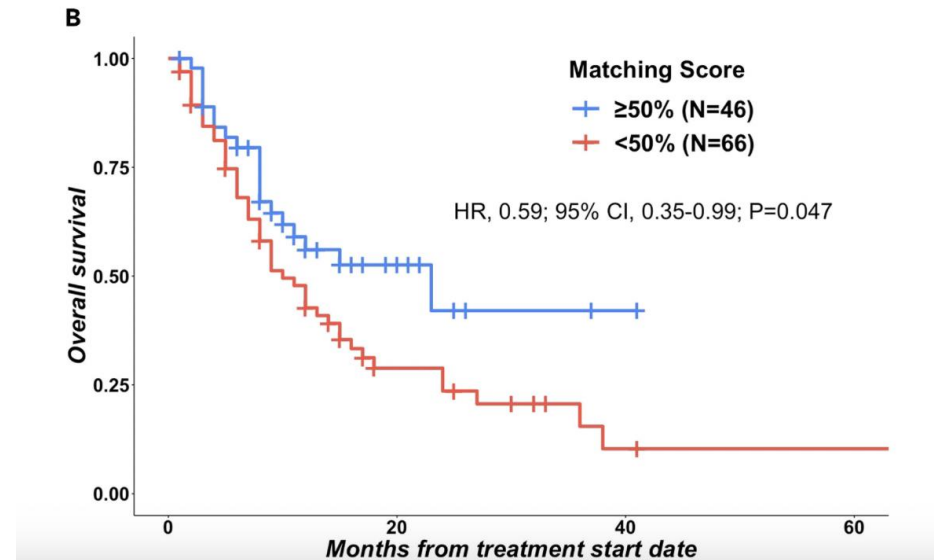
Molecular Tumor Board for Unicorns



- Molecular tumor board
 - A multidisciplinary team that integrates molecular profiling to generate personalized treatment plans

Impact on Clinical Decision Making

- A study of 112 patients with rare/ultra-rare tumors
 - 41% received treatment with a high degree of matching with their molecular alteration
 - Patients who received targeted therapy had a better survival, higher response rate, and better outcomes





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Understanding Barriers and Disparities in Biomarker Testing



Barriers to Precision Medicine

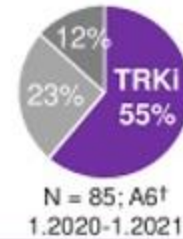
- Patient and clinician understanding of testing
- Time it takes to get the test
- Adequate tissue acquisition
- Insurance/cost



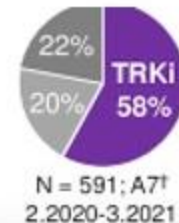
Biomarker Testing Not Always Done

- Another significant barrier to implementation of biomarkers

- 43-year-old woman diagnosed with pT4aN0 **colon cancer**; deferred chemotherapy; right lower quadrant mass later recurred, with carcinomatosis and ascites
- Cancer is dMMR/MSI-high, TMB-high, and *NTRK* fusion positive; pembrolizumab started but PD after 2 months; nivolumab/ipilimumab started but PD again after 2 months



- 50-year-old nonsmoker with metastatic **lung adenocarcinoma**
- *EGFR/ALK/ROS1/BRAF* all negative, PD-L1 <1%; patient received carboplatin, pemetrexed, and pembrolizumab but PD
- NGS panel of original biopsy showed *NTRK* fusion



Patient Disparities and Considerations

- **Precision medicine** – initially believed to be an opportunity to overcome or address known healthcare disparities, because treatment is based purely on genetic or protein alterations
- But, disparities have grown
 - Insurance/ payment for testing
 - Mistrust in healthcare system (genetic testing)
 - Discordance in patient and clinician understanding on the importance of biomarker testing



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Technologies to Optimize Pathways and Biomarker Testing

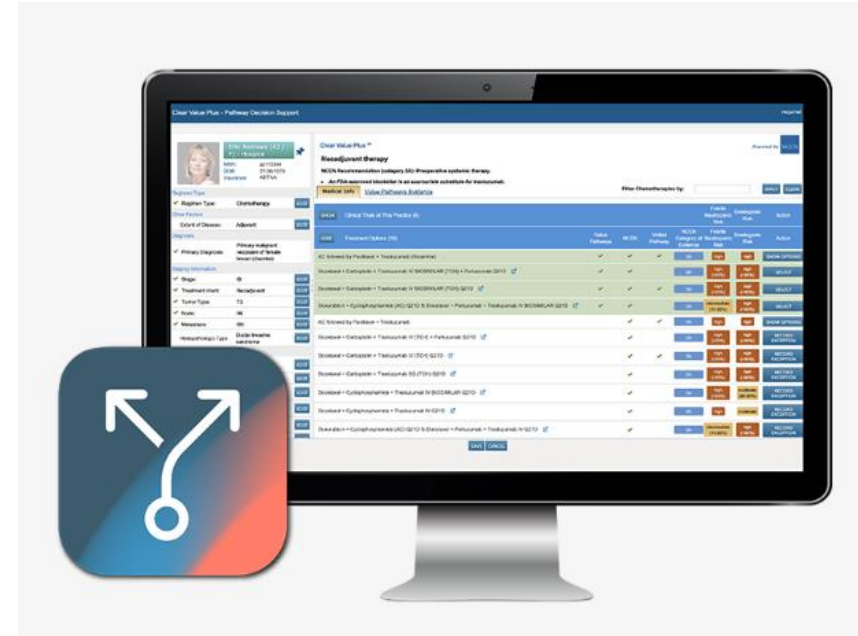


Value Pathways

- Oncology clinical pathways integrated into electronic health record (EHR)
 - Treatment pathways highlight evidence-based treatment options
 - Based on efficacy, toxicity, financial impact to patient and payor
 - Refinement of NCCN Guidelines
 - Narrower list; 100% concordant
 - Includes incorporation of biomarkers relevant for decision making
 - Embedded in clinical decision support tool

Clinical Management Technology

- Oncology decision support tool
- Integrated into provider's EHR and workflow
- Highlights up-to-date evidence-based treatment options at the point of care
 - Presents Value Pathways powered by NCCN and NCCN Guidelines
 - Keeps pace with personalized medicine and the use of diagnostic tests through automatic clinical updates
 - Prompts for relevant information, including biomarkers, to guide treatment options



Clinical Decision Support Systems

- Integration of multi-modal data systems
 - Genomics and multi-omics data
 - Electronic health records
 - Including clinical history, laboratory data, and diagnostic imaging

Clinical Decision Support Systems

- Integration of multi-modal data systems
 - Genomics and multi-omics data
 - Electronic health records
 - Including clinical history, laboratory data, and diagnostic imaging
 - Opportunity for artificial intelligence
 - Review radiology and pathology
 - Integrate all the data together

Key Learning Points

- Biomarker testing – many options, will need a strategy given limited tissue availability
- Economic considerations – the costs go up as the targets become more narrow, and the drugs get refined
- Regulatory advances to develop precision oncology – need for new approaches
- Barriers to widespread implementation include patient and physician understanding and implementation
- Pathways to support precision oncology – technology may be key





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Q&A Session

