

Novartis won't can canakinumab



Madeleine Armstrong

Novartis is keeping the faith in canakinumab in oncology, despite the project's latest failure, this time in first-line non-small cell lung cancer. The phase 3 Canopy-1 trial, which combined cana with Keytruda and chemo, did not show a benefit on its co-primary endpoints of PFS and OS, but Novartis said it saw promising signs in patients with baseline inflammatory biomarkers including high-sensitivity C-reactive protein. Any remaining hopes for the anti-IL-1 beta antibody now rest in adjuvant and neoadjuvant settings. Novartis is clinging to the fact that patients in the adjuvant Canopy-A study are apparently similar to those in Cantos, [the cardiovascular study that kicked off the group's efforts in cancer](#). But cana's chances in cancer now look even slimmer than in March, when the second-line [Canopy-2 trial failed](#). The news could also be bad for Cantargia, which is testing its rival IL-1 blocker nidanilimab in various cancers. [Interim NSCLC data presented at Esmo](#), from the Canfour trial, were hard to interpret, concerning just 27 patients with both first and second-line disease, and including those who had received Keytruda first line - a particularly hard setting to judge given the lack of data in post-PD(L)1 patients.

Anti-IL-1 projects in development for cancer

Project	Company	Description	Indication(s)	Trial details & readouts
Phase 3				
Canakinumab	Novartis	Anti-IL-1 beta MAb (competitive inhibitor)	NSCLC	Canopy-2 , 2L, failed Mar 2021; Canopy-1 , 1L + Keytruda + chemo, failed Oct 2021; Canopy-A , adjuvant, data due 2023; ph2 Canopy-N , neoadjuvant +/- Keytruda, ends Nov 2022
Phase 1/2				
Can04 (nidanilimab)	Cantargia	Anti-IL1RAP MAb	Solid tumours incl pancreatic cancer & NSCLC	Canfour in NSCLC & PDAC, interim data at Esmo 2021; Cestafour in NSCLC, BTC, CRC, started Oct 2021; Cirifour , + Keytruda in solid tumours, ends Jan 2022; Capafour , + FOLFIRINOX in 1L PDAC, ends Jun 2023
Phase 1				
VPM087 (gevokizumab)	Novartis	Anti-IL-1 beta MAb (allosteric inhibitor)	Colorectal, renal & gastro-oesophageal cancers	1L (NCT03798626)

BTC=biliary tract cancer; CRC=colorectal cancer; NSCLC=non-small cell lung cancer; PDAC=pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. Source: Evaluate Pharma & [clinicaltrials.gov](#).

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