Special Issue

Tumor Microenvironment and Immunotherapy in Head and Neck Cancer

Message from the Guest Editor

The tumor microenvironment drives cancer immune phenotype and allows for the identification of inflamed tumors, excluded tumors and deserted tumors. In head and neck cancer (HNC), all the three phenotypes may be represented regardless of etiology. This implies that the first step to approach HNC is to identify which immunophenotype we are facing. Indeed, each phenotype shows distinctive escape mechanisms. Consequently, each immunophenotype requires the reactivation or the inhibition of distinct immune pathways. Therefore, the best immunotherapy approach to head and neck cancer depends on the dominant escape mechanism which, in turn, links to the immune phenotype. In conclusion, the challenge of immunotherapy in HNC is first of all to identify the immunophenotype of the single tumor we are facing; second, to identify potential specific targets of the phenotype; third, to develop drugs directed against the targets; and finally, to test the drug(s) in clinical practice. The goal is to lead to a more informed use of immunotherapy, better selecting the patients to be treated and with which drug.

Guest Editor

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