

Ultra-Low Dose Immunotherapy in India: Reflections from a Recent Visit

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Occasionally in the field of academic medicine we get rare glimpses of very real impact of novel research impacting patients in front of our eyes. On a recent (September, 2024) visit to India, I was blessed to have such a heart-warming opportunity.

As is commonly discussed, the cost of novel cancer medicines is high, and often precludes access for patients in poorer parts of the world. This has been very much the case for immunotherapy, a [Nobel prize winning approach](#), which is inaccessible to most patients in India due to cost. Several years ago, my good friend and collaborator, Mark Ratain and I proposed that the approved dose of nivolumab was [excessively high](#), and that there was opportunity for major dose reductions.

Based off this proposal, Indian investigators performed a randomized [clinical trial](#) using 20 mg of nivolumab, and demonstrated the efficacy of this approach. At 6% of the standard dose, this is 6% of the standard cost. An approach previously off-limits due to cost is now affordable to many patients.

I recently had the great honor to be invited by Dr Manju Sengar to visit Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, and also lecture at the [ecancer conference](#). I heard from many clinicians around the country now using the ultra-low dose of nivolumab to increase access. I even had the great pleasure to meet patients receiving this dose in the clinic in Mumbai. Hopefully this is only the beginning of future work to increase access to life-saving medications around the world.