Solid pavestones are needed to pave a solid way to success

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Published online: 27 November 2019

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In the last decade, we have experienced exciting and rewarding achievements in cancer immunology and immunotherapy. Immune checkpoint blockade and adoptive T cell transfer have now become the standard of care for certain human cancers and some therapies have achieved a 5-year durable response. The accumulated efforts of thousands of researchers were necessary to make it to this point, and these victories should be celebrated. Still, we have not yet reached the ultimate goal: to gain a comprehensive knowledge of how the immune system functions in the context of malignancy and translates that knowledge into therapeutic strategies that are effective for every patient diagnosed with cancer. Much work remains to be done.

The question is, “How do we continue to advance the field towards this goal?” And the answer is, “One step at time.” We will need a solid road to travel on to take these important steps forward, and to build a solid road we will need solid pavestones. Primary research articles are expected to serve as our solid pavestones, laying out the foundational

discoveries that step-by-step move us onward. As a scientific journal, our job is to publish these solid pavestones needed for paving the way to success.

As we continue to make progress, it is important to remember that there will be surprises and sharp curves along the way. Often where the next step leads us does not look at all like we first imagined. Thus, a well-formed scientific question should always be inclusive, allowing for every possible experimental outcome, as each of these outcomes could be an answer to the question and might be critical for leading us to the next step. Thus, CIIM welcomes and encourages research papers that seek to address these types of inclusive scientific questions. Because the field of cancer immunology and immunotherapy is facing challenges at the interface of cancer biology and immunology, it is not surprising that the interaction between the heterogeneity of cancer and the diversity of immune system would produce many unpredictable outcomes. This means that data produced in our experiments may be somewhat uncomfortable at times, as it may be contrary to accepted dogma or may include some objective “outliers.” At CIIM, we feel that this is entirely acceptable in a scientific research paper as long as it can be repeatedly recorded and precisely interpreted.

CIIM has been dedicated to the field of cancer immunology and immunotherapy since 1976 when cancer immunotherapy was still a dream. We are grateful to the founding editors and those who have followed for providing a “home” at CIIM for many high impact papers that truly contributed to the success of today’s cancer immunotherapy. I am honored to follow the legacy left by them and to serve this community. It is my hope that each research paper we publish at CIIM is a solid pavestone that can be used to pave a solid way for us to advance our understanding of cancer immunology and to develop new immunotherapy for our patients.

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