Commentary

Genetics: Immune Response to Cancer Treatment

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Received: January 5, 2021; **Accepted:** January 22, 2021; **Published:** January 29, 2021

Keywords Immune; Cancer

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A new study has found that inherited genetic variation plays a role in who is likely to benefit from checkpoint inhibitors, which release the immune system's brakes so it can attack cancer. The study also points to potential new targets that could help even more patients unleash their immune system's natural power to fight off malignant cells.

The next step is to use the data to formulate "polygenic" approaches—taking a large number of genes into account to predict which cancer patients will benefit from current therapies, and developing new drugs for those who will not.