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Summary

New therapies in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC): The decade of success

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UEG Week Barcelona 2026 | Presentation

Endoscopy | Mechanisms & Personalised Medicine | Hepatobiliary | Digestive Oncology

October 18, 2026

The speaker reviewed immunotherapy advances in hepatocellular carcinoma, emphasizing treatment selection challenges, emerging biomarkers like VTEC for choosing between regimens, and evolving strategies to extend immunotherapy to earlier disease stages including downstaging and transplant settings.

KEY POINTS

- Three main immunotherapy combinations are available in Europe for advanced HCC: Atezolizumab-Bevacizumab, Durvalumab-Tremelimumab, and Nivolumab-Ipilimumab, with contraindications to bevacizumab playing a major role in treatment selection.
- The speaker discussed a recent French retrospective study showing high VTEC (vessel encapsulating tumour cluster) staining was associated with better survival in patients treated with Atezolizumab-Bevacizumab but less response with Durvalumab-Tremelimumab, potentially helping to select between regimens, though validation is needed.
- Phase 3 trials combining locoregional therapy (TACE) with systemic immunotherapy showed positive progression-free survival results, but the speaker cautioned these combinations are not yet recommended due to lacking survival data and high toxicity including liver decompensation concerns.
- A Chinese downstaging study with Atezolizumab-Bevacizumab followed by surgery showed lower time to treatment failure in the combined approach, though only 200 of approximately 500 initial patients underwent surgery, and the speaker noted this needs validation in European populations.
- The speaker presented an Italian study where 16 of 61 patients with advanced HCC underwent liver transplantation after immunotherapy, with one recurrence and 25% acute rejection, using a three-month washout period in the speaker's French practice.

– The speaker advocated for repeated tumour board discussions of responding advanced HCC patients to consider curative approaches and described a French molecular sequencing program to identify targeted therapies from other cancer types.

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