

Breast Cancer Patient with Immunotherapy

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First in the World!
King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital
Treats a Breast Cancer Patient with Immunotherapy

Chula Communication Center (CCC)

Queen Sirikit Center for Breast Cancer, King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Thai Red Cross Society (Chulalongkorn Hospital), has become the world's first institution to successfully use immunotherapy to treat a

breast cancer patient, who is now in complete remission with minimal side effects and experiencing an uplifted quality of life.

After the ordeals of various breast cancer treatments that could not stop the disease from spreading to her liver, lungs, and bones, Ploenpit Goware decided to stop the treatments and was resigned to spend the rest of her days with her daughter. That was before Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris Chatamra, Head of the Queen Sirikit Center for Breast Cancer, Chulalongkorn Hospital, recommended “Immunotherapy”, giving her a sense of renewed hope.



Ploenpit Goware

“My condition remarkably improved after 6 months of treatment — from being bound to a wheelchair and having trouble walking because of compromised skeletal integrity, now I can walk up and down the stairs without feeling exhausted. The pain in my bones has disappeared and I no longer need to rely on painkillers. The biopsy results from my liver with metastasized cancer show no traces of cancer cells left,” Ploenpit said with a smile, adding that the side effects of the treatment were only some blisters and minor joint pains. Today, Ploenpit is living a normal life. She only has to be mindful of the movements involving her back and neck due to compromised bones from her previous treatments some years ago.

Breast Cancer: The Number One Threat to Women Worldwide

Breast cancer has become the world's most prevalent cancer that costs women their lives, and is also the most widespread among Thai women. According to global standards, there are many ways to treat breast cancer, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, and surgery. However, for some patients, even after these treatments, cancer may recur and many are looking into immunotherapy as an alternative.

"Immunotherapy is one option for cancer treatments. Studies have been conducted overseas over several decades, but the method has never been specifically applied to breast cancer treatment, nor has there been any tailor-made treatment for each patient," said Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris.

"For a long time now, the center has been studying immunotherapy, preparing tools and equipment, as well as amassing the medical team, until we found a way to treat breast cancer with immunotherapy and help patients."



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris Chatamra,
Head of the Queen Sirikit Center for Breast Cancer, Chulalongkorn Hospital

Principles of Immunotherapy in the Treatment of Breast Cancer

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris explained that immunotherapy works by stimulating the most common and basic immune cells or T-cells in order to get rid of the cancer cells.

“The immune system is the most crucial system of the human body. When pathogens enter the body, the system activates to fight them. However, when cancer cells occur, the immune system does not destroy these cells as it misreads them for normal cells. With this in mind, we have been studying the unique properties of cancer cells, and found that their outer cell membrane contains certain specific proteins that are different in each patient.”

“We take the patient’s immune cells and grow them in the lab alongside the specific proteins (peptides) of that patient’s cancer. Within 24 hours, the immune cells will learn and remember the cancer cells’ specific peptides. Then, we will inject the learned immune cells into the patient’s lymph nodes so

that they spread throughout the immune system and help destroy the cancer cells,” Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris further elaborated on the immunotherapy procedure.



Immunotherapy and the Future of Cancer Treatment in Thailand

Having successfully treated its first patient, the center started using immunotherapy to treat other breast cancer patients. The immunotherapy treatment cost is expected to be cut down by one-third from that of the first patient’s treatment – making it cost even less than chemotherapy.

“In over 50 years of my experience as a breast cancer doctor, times have drastically changed. With early detection, coupled with immunotherapy treatment, patients have up to 90 percent chance of being cured.”

“For those who are cured, nobody can tell if the cancer will come back. The only thing I can say is that the immune system will remain in the body forever, and should there be new cancer cells, it should be enough to put up a fight.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kris pointed out that most importantly, the immune system can access any part of the body, including the brain, whereas chemotherapy cannot. “Do not despair. I want every patient to have hope,” he added.

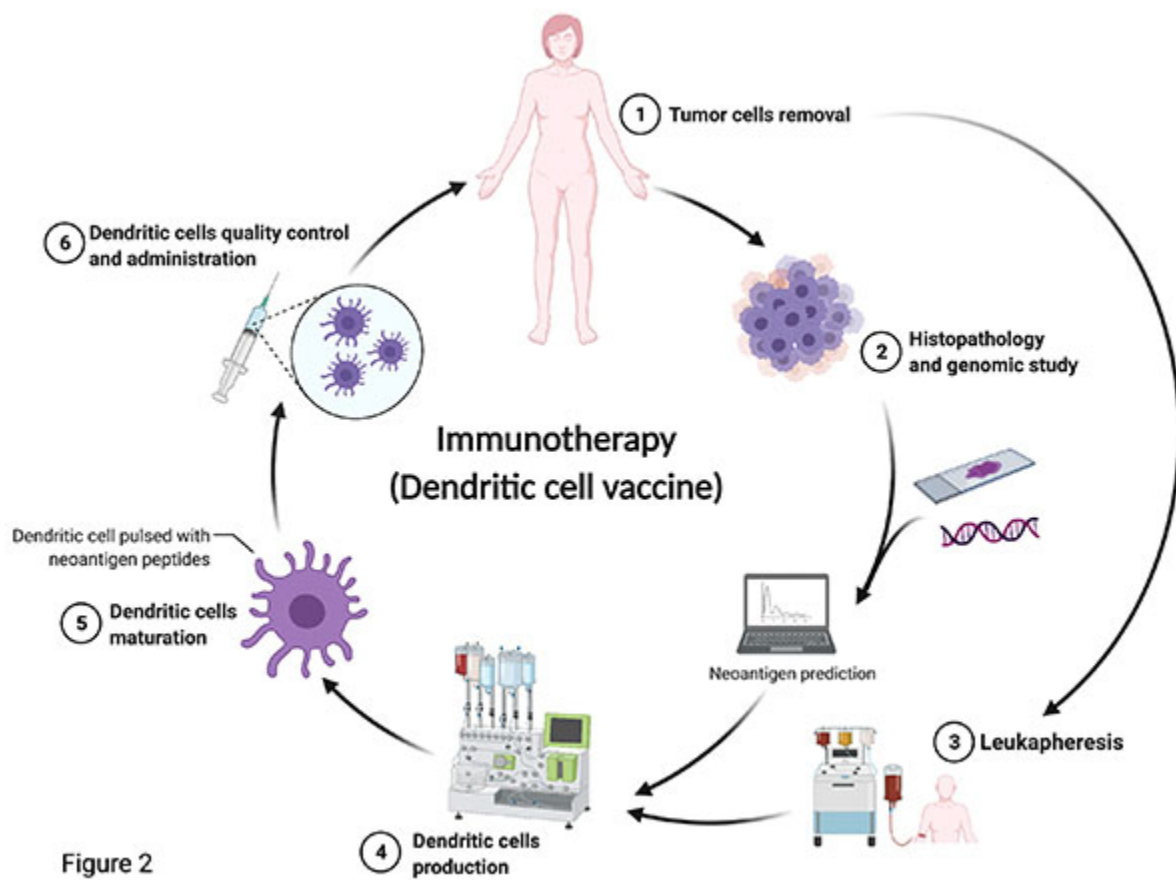


Figure 2

