DRAGON trial: durable remission rate with the latent TGFβ1 inhibitor linavonkibart (SRK-181) and pembrolizumab in patients with immune checkpoint inhibitor–resistant advanced cancers

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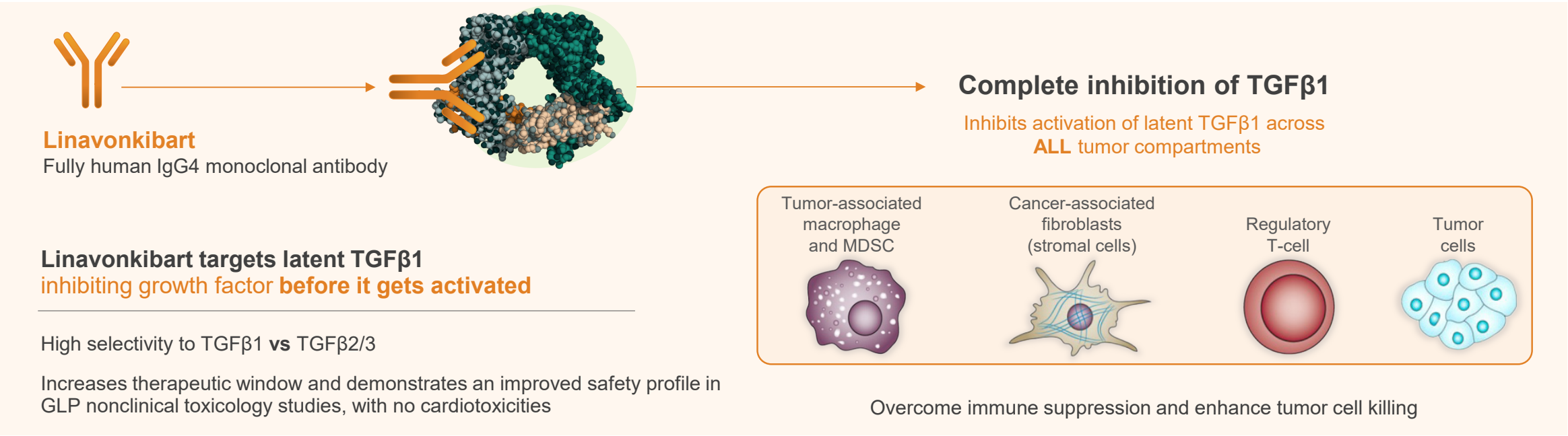
Introduction

- Linavonkibart (SRK-181) is a first-in-class, fully human IgG4 monoclonal antibody that inhibits latent transforming growth factor beta-1 (TGFβ1) within the tumor microenvironment, acting in a context-independent manner (**Figure 1**)
- In mouse tumor models of bladder, melanoma, and breast cancer, linavonkibart in combination with anti–programmed cell death protein 1 (anti-PD-1) therapy overcame primary anti-PD-1 resistance and demonstrated antitumor activity[1]

Figure 1. Linavonkibart proposed mechanism of action[1,2]

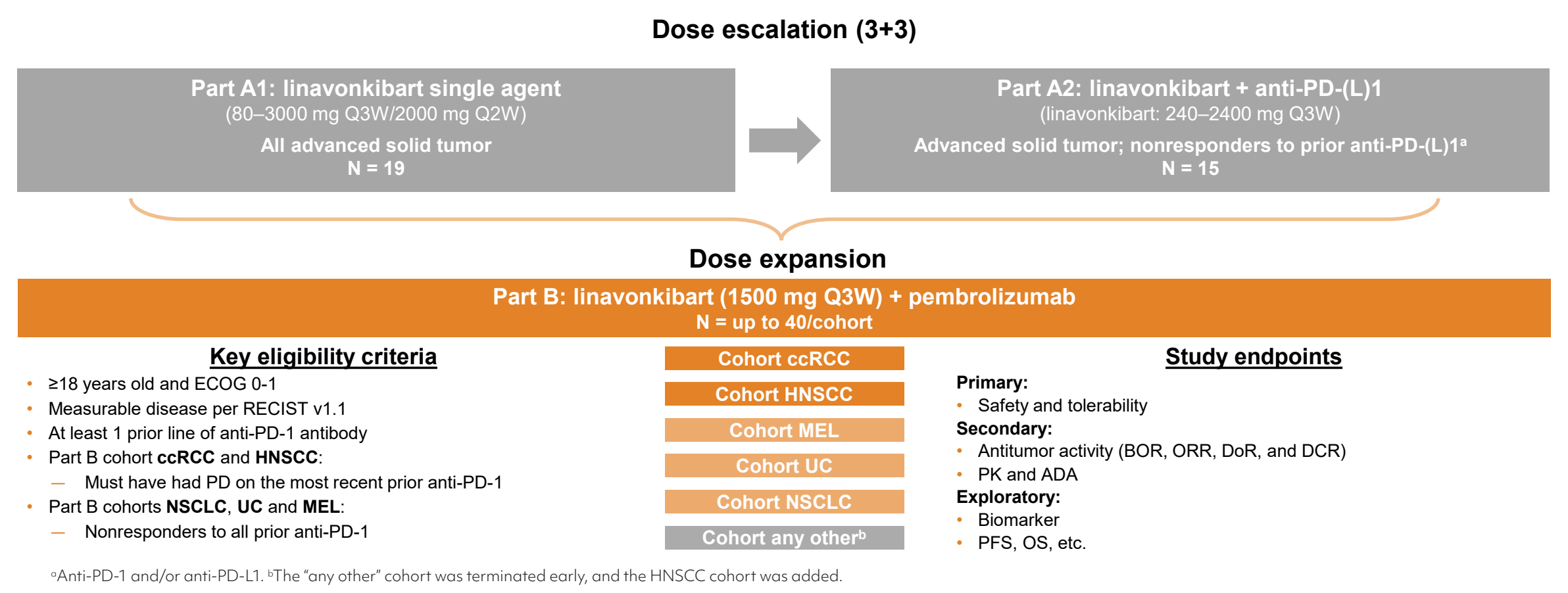


- Here, we present preliminary safety, efficacy, and biomarker results from DRAGON (NCT04291079), a phase 1 study that evaluates linavonkibart alone or in combination with pembrolizumab in patients who received prior anti-PD-1 therapy

Phase 1 clinical trial overview

- DRAGON (NCT04291079) is an ongoing, open-label, phase 1 study that evaluates linavonkibart as a single agent or in combination with pembrolizumab (**Figure 2**)
- In the phase 1, part A dose escalation, linavonkibart was well tolerated, with no dose-limiting toxicities or grade ≥4 treatment-related adverse events (TRAEs), and efficacy results were promising[3,4] The recommended dose for part B was 1500 mg once every 3 weeks

Figure 2. DRAGON study design



Dose escalation (3+3)

Part A1: linavonkibart single agent
(80–3000 mg Q3W/2000 mg Q2W)
All advanced solid tumor
N = 19

Part A2: linavonkibart + anti-PD-(L)1
(linavonkibart: 240–2400 mg Q3W)
Advanced solid tumor; nonresponders to prior anti-PD-(L)1[a]
N = 15

Dose expansion

Part B: linavonkibart (1500 mg Q3W) + pembrolizumab
N = up to 40/cohort

Key eligibility criteria

- ≥18 years old and ECOG 0-1
- Measurable disease per RECIST v1.1
- At least 1 prior line of anti-PD-1 antibody
- Part B cohort **ccRCC** and **HNSCC**:
  - Must have had PD on the most recent prior anti-PD-1
- Part B cohorts **NSCLC**, **UC** and **MEL**:
  - Nonresponders to all prior anti-PD-1

Cohort ccRCC
Cohort HNSCC
Cohort MEL
Cohort UC
Cohort NSCLC
Cohort any other[b]

Study endpoints

Primary:
- Safety and tolerability

Secondary:
- Antitumor activity (BOR, ORR, DoR, and DCR)
- PK and ADA

Exploratory:
- Biomarker
- PFS, OS, etc.

[a]Anti-PD-1 and/or anti-PD-L1. [b]The "any other" cohort was terminated early, and the HNSCC cohort was added.

Phase 1 dose expansion

Patient demographics and disposition

- Of those enrolled, all patients had a best response of stable disease (SD) or progressive disease (PD) on prior anti-PD-1, and all but 2 patients with melanoma had disease progression on the last prior anti-PD-1 therapy (**Table 1**)

Safety

- There was only 1 grade 4 TRAE (dermatitis exfoliative generalized) and no grade 5 TRAEs
- Treatment-related serious adverse events occurring in >2% of patients included colitis and pemphigoid in 2 patients each (immune-related adverse events)
  - TRAEs occurring in >5% of patients are shown in (**Table 2**)

Table 1. Baseline characteristics and patient disposition

Baseline characteristics	**All[a]**
N	78
Age, median (range)	65 y (32–81 y)
Gender, M, n (%)	56 (71.8)
Prior lines of therapy, median (range)	3 (1–9)
Number of lines of prior anti-PD-(L)1, n (%)	
1	48 (61.5)
2	23 (29.5)
3	6 (7.7)
4	1 (1.3)
Best response to last prior anti-PD-(L)1, n (%)	
Stable disease	28 (35.9)
Progressive disease	50 (64.1)
Disease progressed from the last prior anti-PD-1, n (%)	76 (97.4)[b]
Patient disposition	**All[a]**
Enrolled	78
On study, n (%)	4 (5.1)
Stopped treatment, n (%)	74 (94.9)
Reason for completion/discontinuation, n (%)	
Disease progression based on RECIST v1.1	44 (56.4)
Clinical progression	5 (6.4)
Adverse event	19 (24.4)[c]
Withdrawal of consent	5 (6.4)
Investigator decision	1 (1.3)

Data cutoff: September 9, 2024. [a]Includes patients with ccRCC (30), HNSCC (11), MEL (11), UC (11), NSCLC (11), and 4 patients in "any other" cohort. [b]Two MEL patients discontinued the last prior anti-PD-(L)1 due to other reasons instead of disease progression. [c]Eleven (14.1%) patients discontinued due to AEs related to linavonkibart (rash maculo-papular [3 patients]; dermatitis exfoliative generalized, immune-mediated vasculitis, lichenoid keratosis, pneumonitis, rash erythematous, stomatitis, squamous cell carcinoma of skin [1 patient each]; and immune-mediated myocarditis and pemphigoid in the same patient); 13 (16.7%) patients discontinued due to AEs related to linavonkibart or pembrolizumab (those listed prior, plus colitis and pneumonitis [1 patient each]).

Table 2. Treatment-related adverse events

Treatment-related adverse event[a]	**All grades (>5%) N = 78**	**≥Grade 3 N = 78**
Rash[b]	26 (33.3%)[c]	11 (14.1%)[c]
Pruritus	21 (26.9%)[c]	1 (1.3%)[c]
Fatigue	17 (21.8%)	1 (1.3%)
Diarrhea	12 (15.4%)	0
Nausea	6 (7.7%)	1 (1.3%)
Arthralgia	5 (6.4%)	0
ALT increased	4 (5.1%)	2 (2.6%)
AST increased	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.3%)
Decreased appetite	4 (5.1%)	0
Dyspnea	4 (5.1%)	0
Pyrexia	4 (5.1%)	0
Stomatitis	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.3%)
Vomiting	4 (5.1%)	0

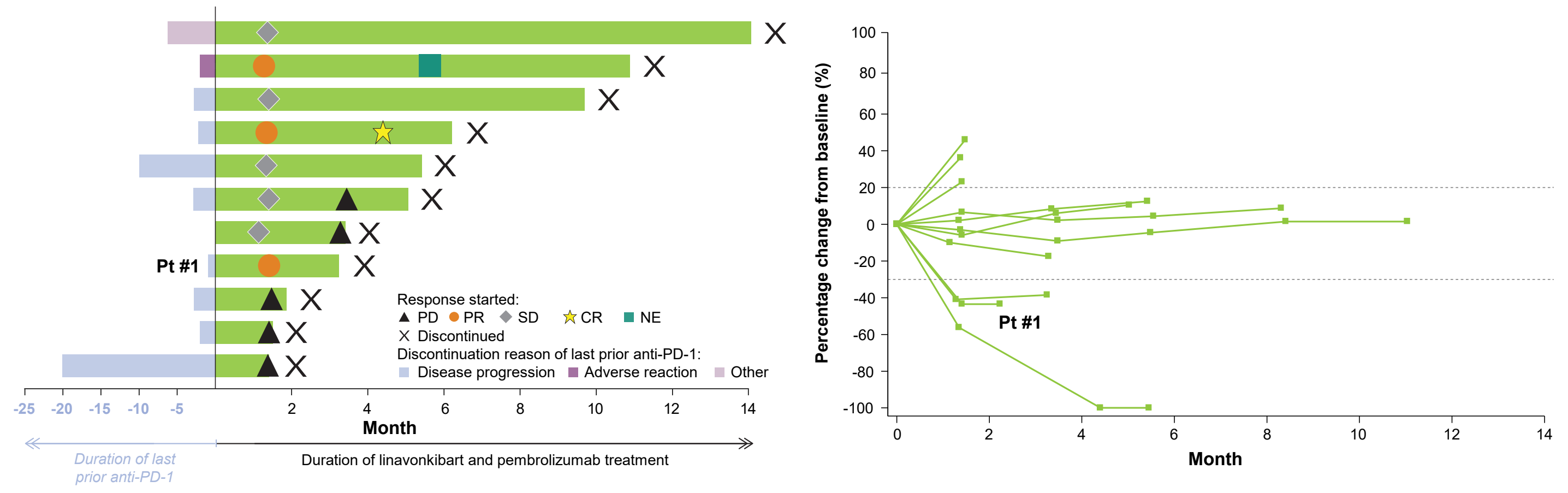
Data cutoff: September 9, 2024. [a]A treatment-related adverse event is an event with either a relationship to linavonkibart or a relationship to anti-PD-(L)1 drug categorized as "Related." [b]Rash includes rash, rash macular, rash maculo-papular, rash erythematous, and rash pruritic. [c]Treatment-related immune-related adverse event.

Phase 1 dose expansion: efficacy

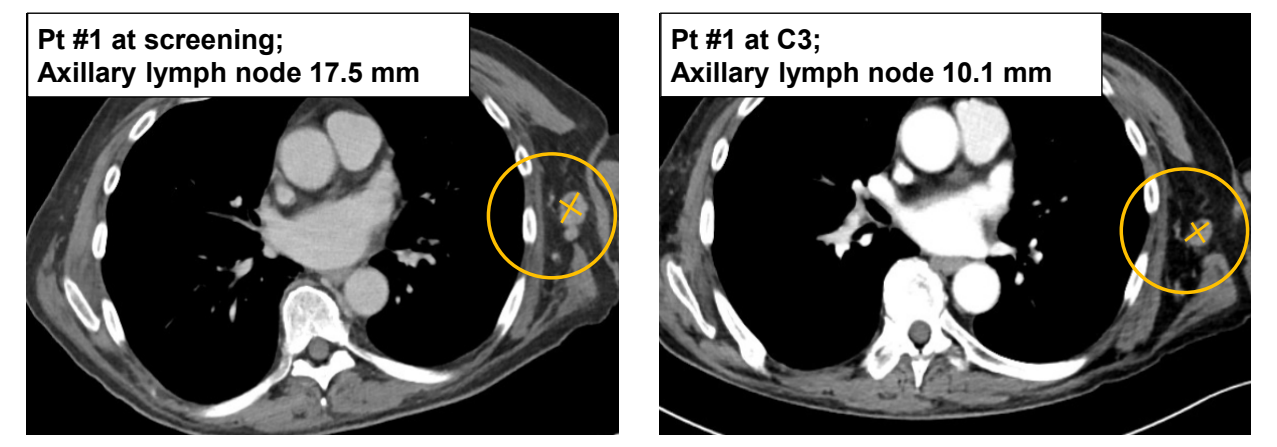
Melanoma

- Median lines of prior cancer therapy: 3 (range, 1–7)

Figure 3. Clinical responses in melanoma



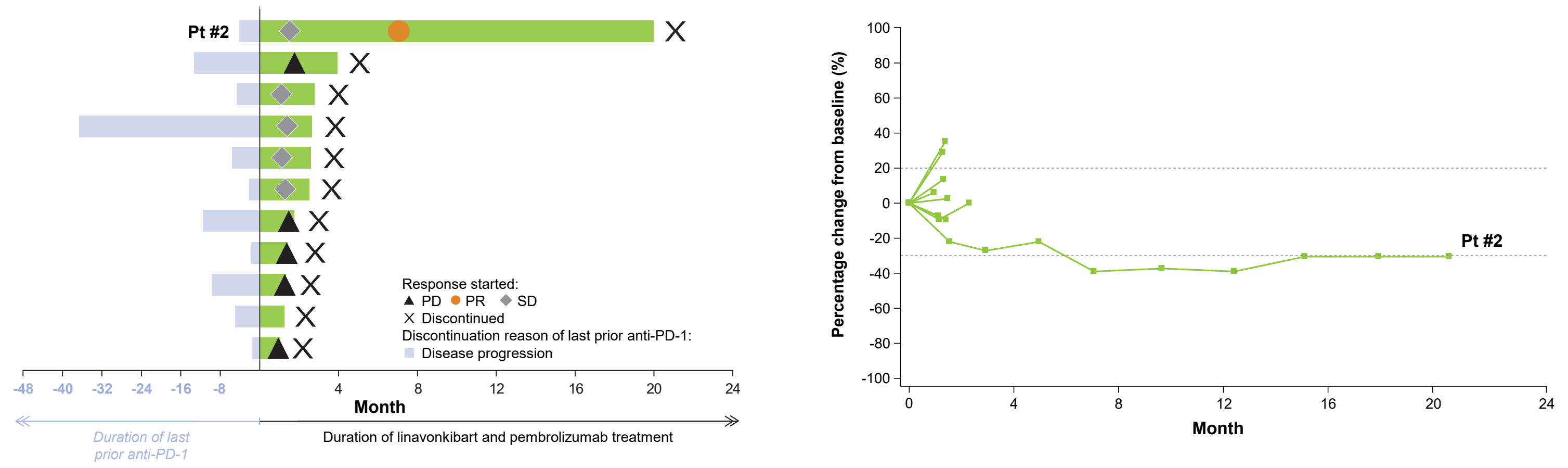
Efficacy	Intention-to-treat N = 11
ORR	3 (27.3%)
CR (unconfirmed)	1 (9.1%)
PR (confirmed)	2 (18.2%)
mDoR (months)	4.9 (4.0, 7.2)
DCR	8 (72.7%)



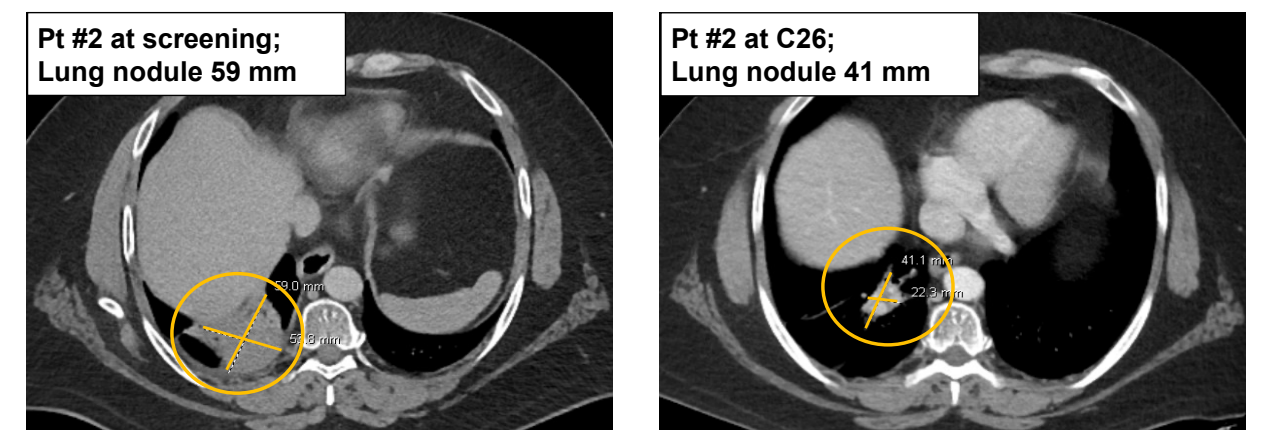
Urothelial carcinoma

- Median lines of prior cancer therapy: 4 (range, 2–5)

Figure 4. Clinical responses in urothelial carcinoma



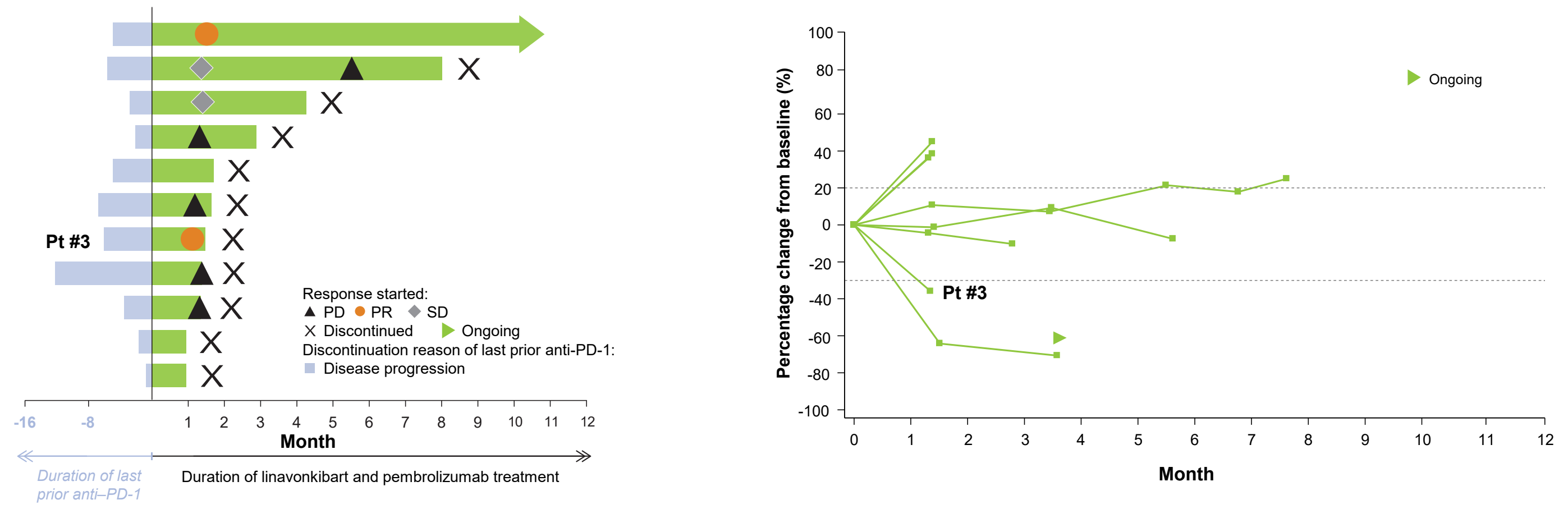
Efficacy	Intention-to-treat N = 11
ORR	1 (9.1%)
PR (confirmed)	1 (9.1%)
mDoR (months)	12.9 (12.9, 12.9)
DCR	5 (45.5%)



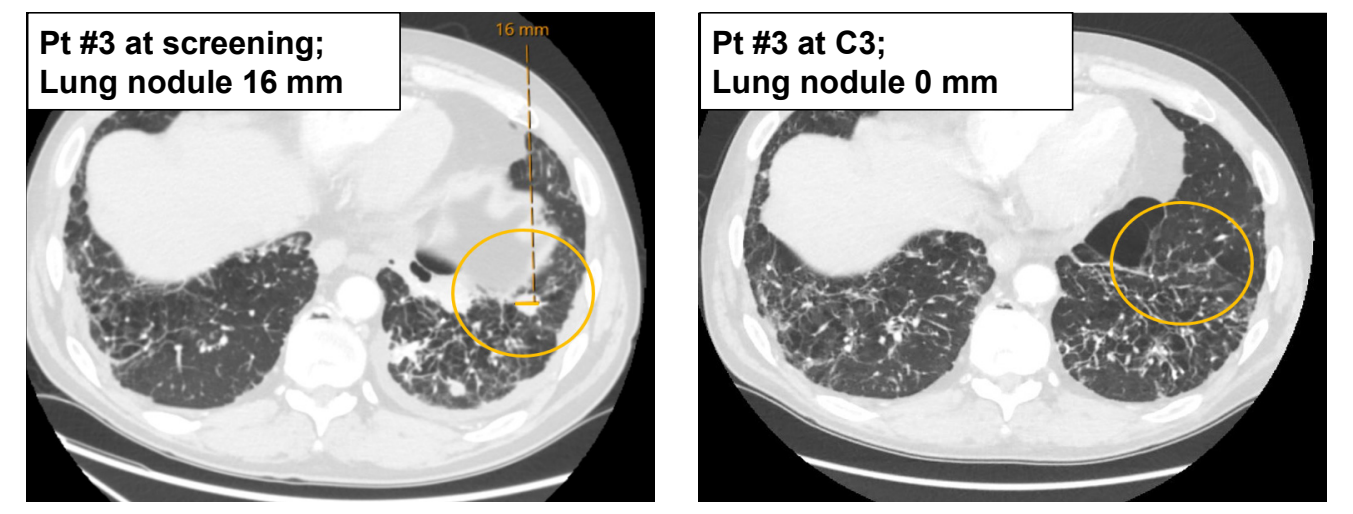
Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma cohort

- Median lines of prior cancer therapy: 3 (range, 1–7)

Figure 5. Clinical responses in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma



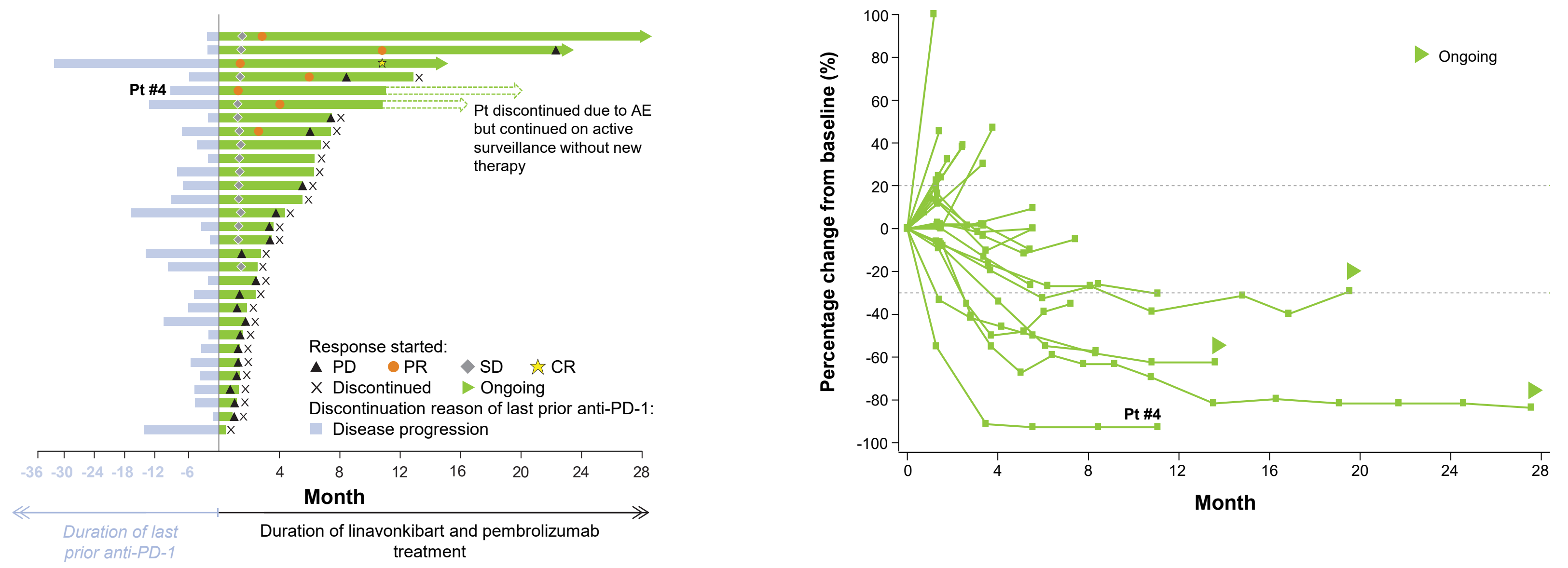
Efficacy	Intention-to-treat N = 11
ORR	2 (18.2%)
PR (confirmed)	1 (9.1%)
PR (unconfirmed)	1 (9.1%)
mDoR (months)	4.7 (0.1, 9.3+)
DCR	4 (36.4%)



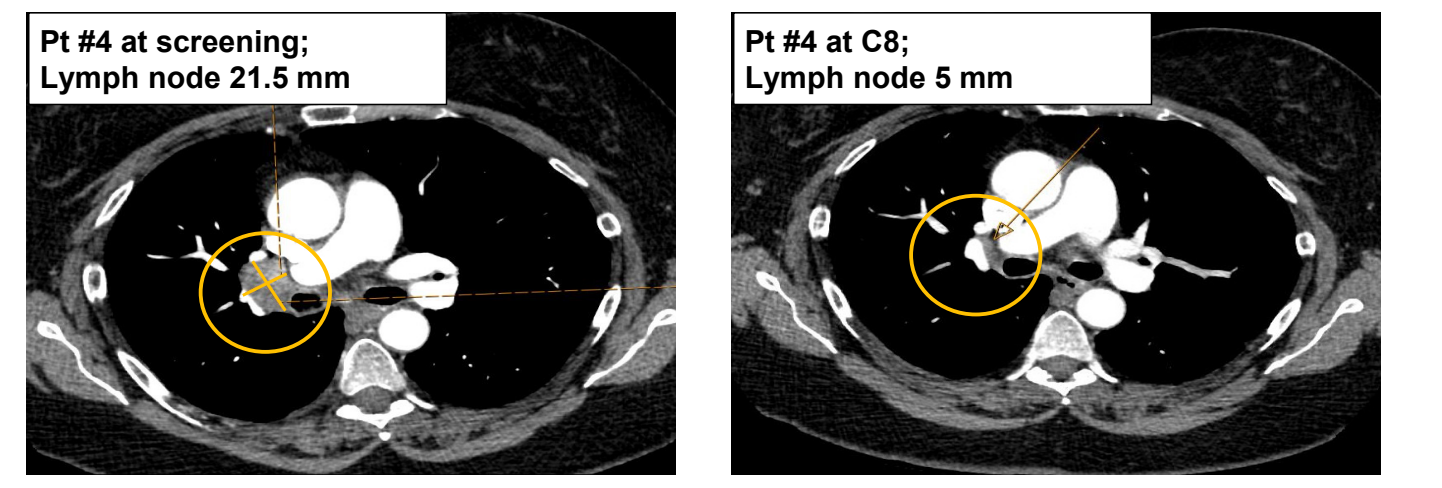
Clear cell renal cell carcinoma cohort

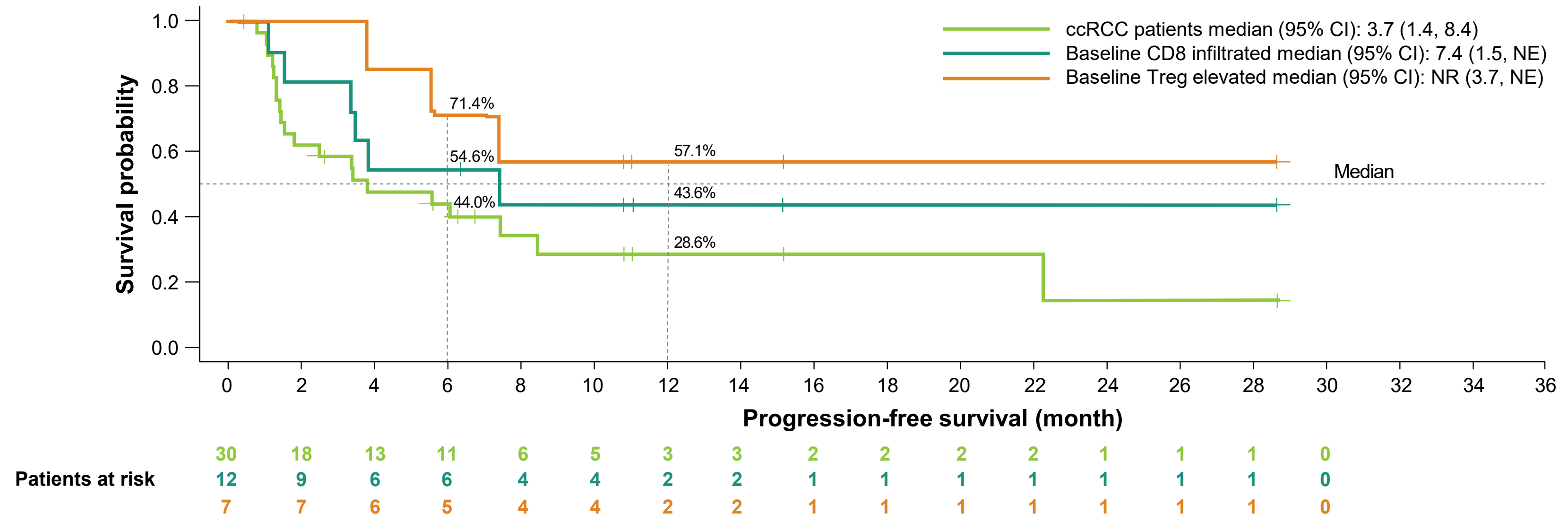
- IMDC score: intermediate, 67%; poor, 30%
- Median lines of prior cancer therapy: 2 (range, 1–9), with 29 (97%) patients receiving at least 1 prior anti-PD-1 and tyrosine kinase inhibitor

Figure 6. Clinical responses in clear cell renal cell carcinoma



Efficacy	Intention-to-treat N = 30
ORR	7 (23.3%)
CR (confirmed)	1 (3.3%)
PR (confirmed)	5 (16.7%)
PR (unconfirmed)	1 (3.3%)
mDoR (months)	9.8 (2.5, 25.9+)
DCR	17 (56.7%)



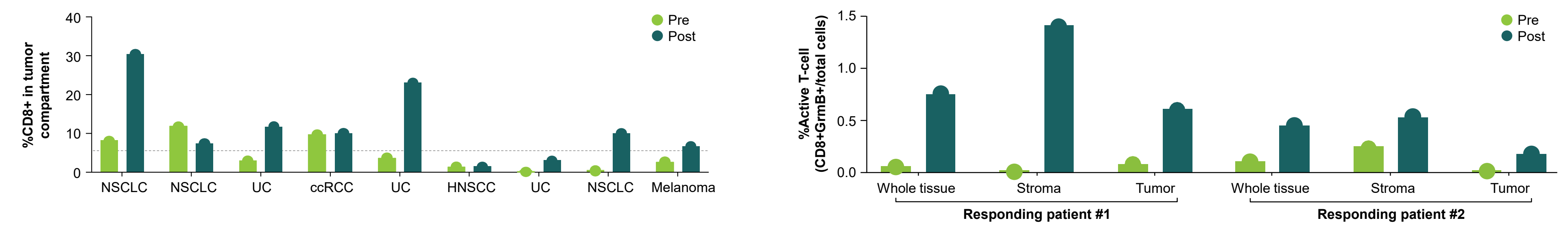


Data cutoff: September 9, 2024. There were no responses observed in the NSCLC cohort.

Proof of mechanism

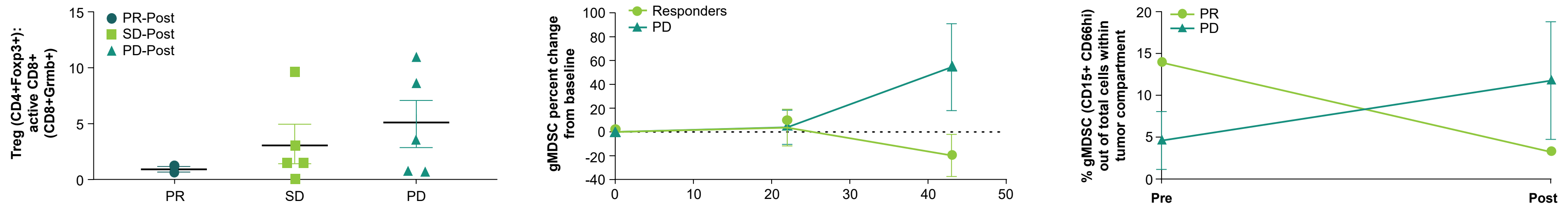
- Linavonkibart combined with pembrolizumab increased CD8+ T-cell tumor infiltration (**Figure 7A**) and activation (CD8+GrmB+; **Figure 7B**) in responding patients
- Tumor shrinkage was associated with a lower ratio of regulatory T-cells (Treg) to activated CD8+ T-cells (**Figure 7C**)
- Circulating (**Figure 7D**) and tumor (**Figure 7E**) granulocytic myeloid-derived suppressor cells decreased in responding patients

Figure 7. Linavonkibart combined with pembrolizumab establishes a proinflammatory tumor microenvironment across multiple tumor types



A) Linavonkibart and pembrolizumab increased CD8+ T-cell infiltration across multiple tumor types

B) CD8 + T-cells were activated in responding patients



C) Treg: active CD8 + T-cell ratio lower in responders compared to nonresponders

D) Circulating gMDSC were suppressed in responders and elevated in PD

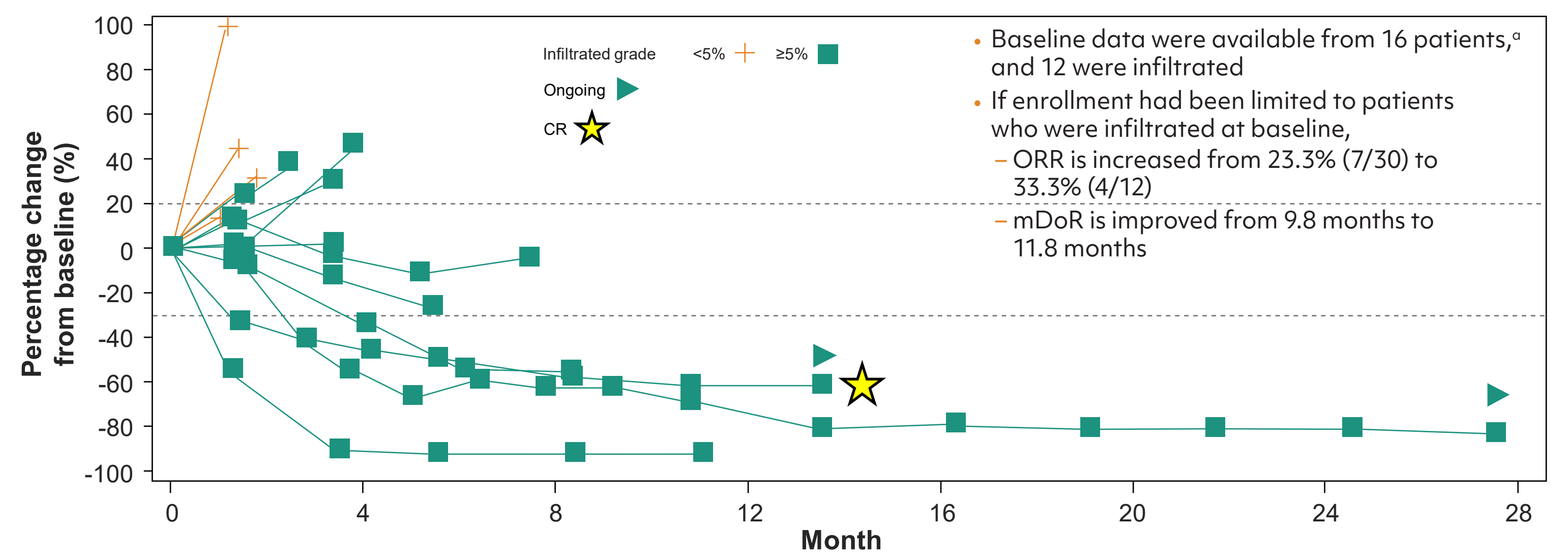
E) gMDSC were suppressed in tumor microenvironment of responders and elevated in PD

Biopsies were collected at baseline and post-treatment between day 28 to 48. Tumor expression data were generated from biopsies using either immunohistochemistry or in situ hybridization. Circulating gMDSC data were generated by flow cytometry.

- Elevated baseline CD8+ T-cell (**Figure 8A**), Treg (**Figure 8B**), and TGFβ1 (**Figure 8C**) levels in the tumor may suggest a higher chance of clinical response with linavonkibart combination therapy for patients with ccRCC

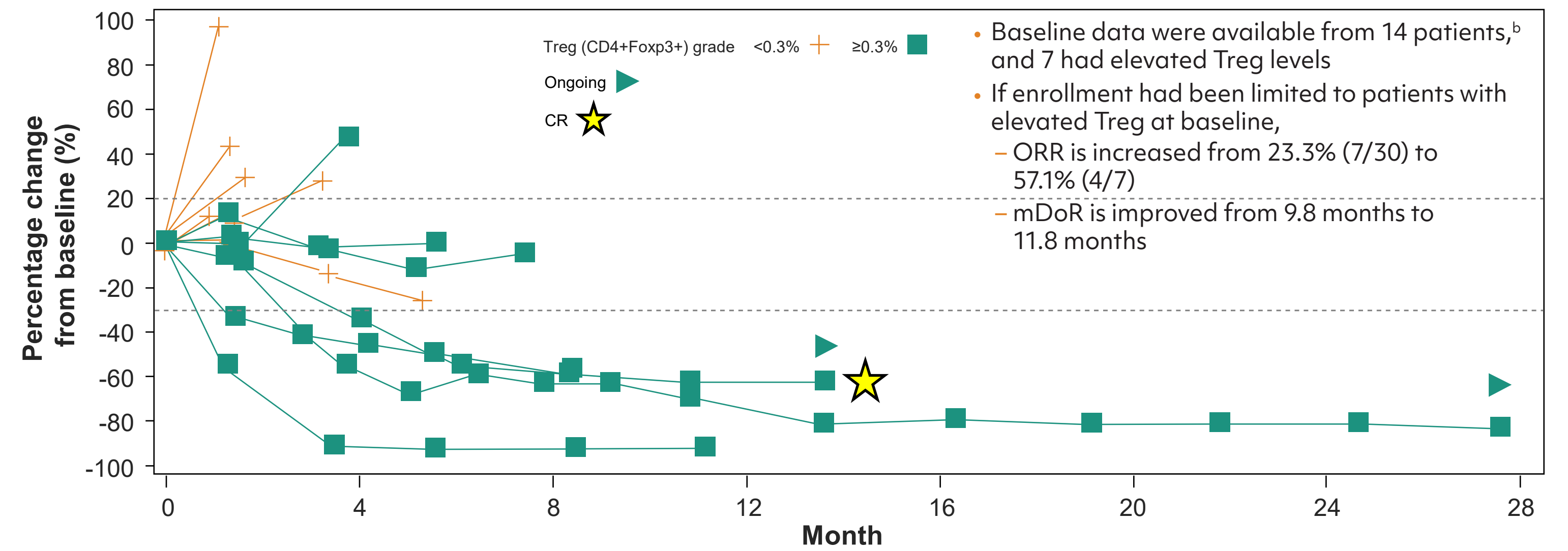
Figure 8. Biomarker data may provide a strategy for selection of ccRCC patients with a higher chance of response

A) Baseline CD8+ T-cell infiltration status



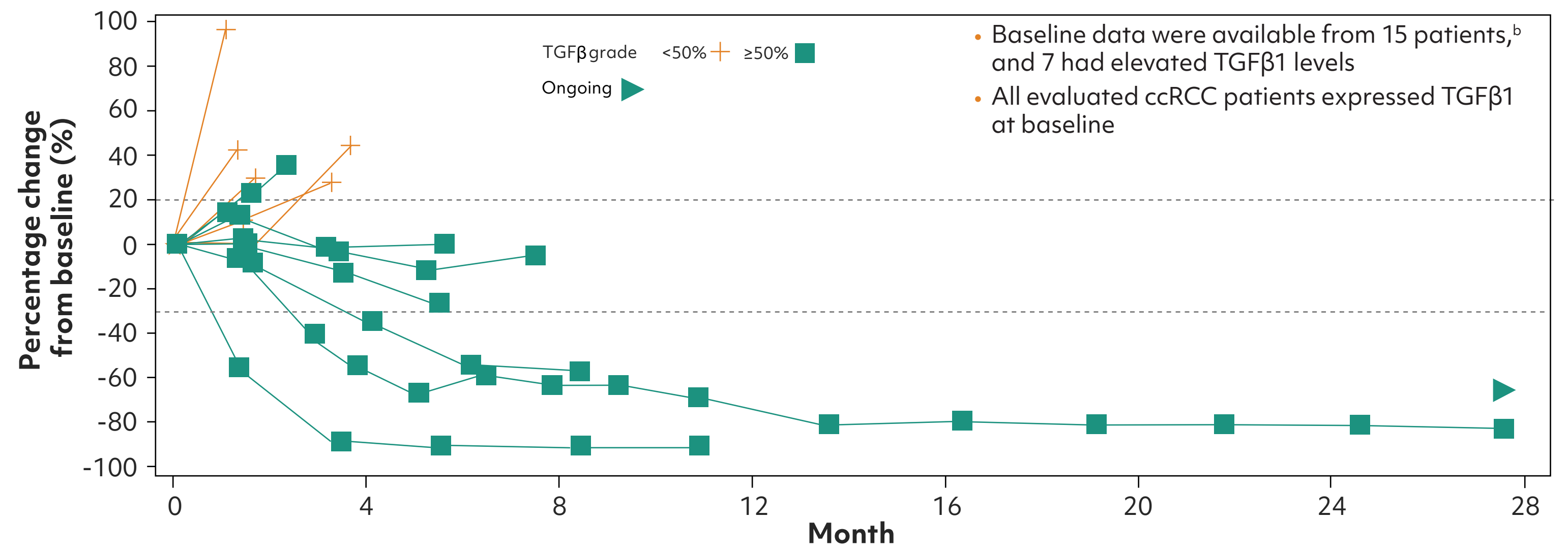
- Baseline data were available from 16 patients,[a] and 12 were infiltrated
- If enrollment had been limited to patients who were infiltrated at baseline,
  - ORR is increased from 23.3% (7/30) to 33.3% (4/12)
  - mDoR is improved from 9.8 months to 11.8 months

B) Elevated baseline Treg (CD4+Foxp3+) levels within the tumor compartment



- Baseline data were available from 14 patients,[b] and 7 had elevated Treg levels
- If enrollment had been limited to patients with elevated Treg at baseline,
  - ORR is increased from 23.3% (7/30) to 57.1% (4/7)
  - mDoR is improved from 9.8 months to 11.8 months

C) Elevated baseline TGFβ1 levels within tumor compartment



- Baseline data were available from 15 patients,[b] and 7 had elevated TGFβ1 levels
- All evaluated ccRCC patients expressed TGFβ1 at baseline

Data cutoff: September 9, 2024. [a]Two patients progressed prior to the first scan and are not represented in the spider plot. [b]One patient progressed prior to the first scan and is not represented in the spider plot.

Conclusions

- The combination of linavonkibart and pembrolizumab demonstrated a manageable safety profile
- The combination treatment demonstrated durable antitumor activity in heavily pretreated patients with anti–PD-1–resistant cancer across multiple cancer types
- Biomarker data support a proof of mechanism and identify a potential patient selection strategy
  - Linavonkibart combination therapy induced a proinflammatory tumor microenvironment
  - Both ORR and mDOR were improved in ccRCC subgroups with elevated baseline CD8+, Treg, and TGFβ1; each of these individually or some combination thereof could be further developed as a possible patient selection strategy
- These data warrant further investigation of linavonkibart

Abbreviations

ADA, antidrug antibody; AE, adverse event; ALT, alanine aminotransferase; AST, aspartate aminotransferase; BOR, best overall response; ccRCC, clear cell renal cell carcinoma; CD, cluster of differentiation; CI, confidence interval; CR, complete response; DCR, disease control rate; DoR, duration of response; ECOG, Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group; Foxp3, forkhead box p3; GLP, Good Laboratory Practice; gMDSC, granulocytic myeloid-derived suppressor cells; GrmB, granzyme B; HNSCC, head and neck squamous cell carcinoma; IMDC, International Metastatic Renal Cell Carcinoma Database Consortium; M, male; mDoR, median DoR; MDSC, myeloid-derived suppressor cell; MEL, melanoma; NE, not evaluable; NSCLC, non–small cell lung cancer; ORR, objective response rate; OS, overall survival; PD, progressive disease; PD-1, programmed cell death protein 1; PD-L1, programmed cell death ligand 1; PD-(L)1, PD-1/PD-L1; PFS, progression-free survival; PK, pharmacokinetic; Post, post-treatment; PR, partial response; PRE, pretreatment; Pt, patient; Q2W, once every 2 weeks; Q3W, once every 3 weeks; RECIST, Response Evaluation Criteria In Solid Tumors; SD, stable disease; TGFβ1, transforming growth factor beta-1; TGFβ2, transforming growth factor beta-2; TGFβ3, transforming growth factor beta-3; Treg, regulatory T-cell; UC, urothelial carcinoma.

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