



What Happens in the Blood When You Have Myeloma?

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Andrew Schorr:

Dr. Lonial, just help us a little bit with the science here, some people, where this is all new to them. Could you just help us understand, when somebody has myeloma what's gone wrong in their blood factory?

Dr. Lonial:

When we talk about myeloma cells or we talk about the cancer cells in myeloma, we are focusing on a cell that lives in the bone marrow called a plasma cell. And plasma cells have a normal job. When they are not cancerous their job is to make antibodies. When you get sick or you get a vaccine and we expect your body to be able to defend against seeing that infection or seeing that virus again in the future, it's because of normal plasma cells that you're able to fight that battle and not get sick. When you get the flu vaccine and you don't get the flu because of it, you can thank your plasma cells for that.

Now, in myeloma those plasma cells lose their normal regulation. Rather than being turned on and turned off as you're exposed to infections, these cells are just turned on. All they do is grow and grow and make more antibody and make more antibody, and by doing that they crowd out normal plasma cells, so you lose the ability to make normal gamma globulin. That's why many of you may have had infections right before you were diagnosed. They also start to invade the bones or chew holes in the bones. That's why some of you may have had fractures or bone pain when you were diagnosed. And that antibody itself can clog up the kidneys, and that's why many of you may have

had kidney problems when you were diagnosed. And if caught early all of those can be reversed with effective therapy.

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