Keytruda® (pembrolizumab) – Updated indication, accelerated approval converted to full approval

- On January 25, 2024, the FDA granted full approval of Merck's Keytruda (pembrolizumab), for the treatment of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) secondary to hepatitis B who have received prior systemic therapy other than a PD-1/PD-L1-containing regimen.

- This FDA action converts the accelerated approval of Keytruda for HCC to a full approval and updates the indication.

    — The original accelerated approval was for the treatment of patients with HCC who have been previously treated with sorafenib.

- The approval of Keytruda for the updated indication was based on KEYNOTE-394, a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind study conducted in Asia in patients with Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC) Stage B or C HCC, who were previously treated with sorafenib or oxaliplatin-based chemotherapy and who were not amenable to or were refractory to local-regional therapy. The study enrolled 453 patients, and 360 (79%) had active hepatitis B. Patients were randomized to Keytruda or placebo. The main efficacy measure was overall survival (OS). Additional efficacy outcome measures were progression-free survival (PFS), objective response rate (ORR), and duration of response (DOR).

    — Keytruda improved OS in patients with HCC secondary to hepatitis B. Efficacy results in hepatitis B patients are summarized in the table below.

Endpoint	Keytruda	Placebo
OS		
Median in months (95% CI)	13.9 (12.5, 17.9)	13.0 (10.1, 15.6)
Hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.78 (0.61, 0.99)	
PFS		
Median in months (95% CI)	2 (1.4, 2.7)	2.3 (1.4, 2.8)
Hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.78 (0.61, 1.00)	
ORR		
ORR (95% CI)	11% (7, 16)	1.6% (0.2, 5.7)
DOR		
Median in months (range)	23.9 (2.6+, 44.4+)	5.6 (3.0+, 5.6)

- The recommended dose of Keytruda for the treatment of HCC is 200 mg every 3 weeks or 400 mg every 6 weeks, via intravenous infusion, until disease progression, unacceptable toxicity, or up to 24 months.

- Refer to the Keytruda drug label for dosing for all its other indications.