



# PD-L1 Testing for Lung Cancer: How Your Score Determines Treatment Show Notes

This episode unpacks the science behind PD-L1 testing and its critical role in shaping treatment decisions for non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Through a candid conversation between Dr. Julie Brahmer and patient host Colette Smith, we explore what PD-L1 means, how Tumor Proportion Scores (TPS) guide immunotherapy choices, when to consider a repeat biopsy, and the questions every patient should bring to their oncologist.

## Guests:

### **Dr. Julie Brahmer**

Dr. Julie Brahmer is a thoracic oncologist at Johns Hopkins University Hospital and an internationally recognized leader in lung cancer immunotherapy research. Her pioneering work in PD-L1 and checkpoint inhibitor therapy has helped shape the current standard of care for non-small cell lung cancer, offering new hope and longer survival for patients worldwide.

### **Colette Smith**

Colette Smith is a lung cancer survivor and patient host for the LCFA community. Living with an EGFR Exon 20 insertion mutation for over 11 years, she brings a powerful patient perspective to every conversation—translating complex science into the real-world questions survivors and newly diagnosed patients need answered.

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## Episode Highlights:

- **Understanding PD-L1:** A clear breakdown of what PD-L1 (Programmed Death-Ligand 1) is and how cancer cells use it as a "cloaking device" to hide from the immune system.
- **Decoding Your TPS Score:** Dr. Brahmer explains the Tumor Proportion Score (0–100) and how PD-L1 High ( $\geq 50\%$ ), Low (1–49%), and Negative ( $< 1\%$ ) results shape immunotherapy decisions.
- **Repeat Biopsies in 2026:** Why today's standard of care often includes repeat biopsies to capture changes in PD-L1 expression and other biomarkers over time.



- Immunotherapy Side Effects: What patients need to know about immune-related side effects—from rash and thyroid issues to the rare but serious reactions that may require stopping treatment.
  - When Immunotherapy Isn't the Right Choice: Specific situations—including driver mutations, organ transplants, and active autoimmune diseases—where alternative treatments may be safer.
  - The Power of Clinical Trials: Why every patient should ask about clinical trials at every stage of treatment.
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## Resources

- Learn more about [biomarker testing](#)
  - [LCFA's First 7 Days](#): A Roadmap for the Newly Diagnosed
  - [Understanding PD-L1 in Lung Cancer](#)
  - Download: Questions to Ask Your Care Team About PD-L1 (PDF)
  - [Find a Clinical Trial](#): PD-L1 & Immunotherapy to search for –
    - Immunotherapy combination trials for NSCLC
    - CAR T-cell therapy studies in solid tumors
    - Cancer vaccine trials for lung cancer
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LCFA's mission is the improvement in survivorship of lung cancer patients through the funding of transformative science.

While raising funds to support lung cancer research, LCFA will raise the public's awareness and serve as a resource for patients or anyone seeking answers, hope, and access to updated treatment information, scientific investigation, and clinical trials.

You can also join the conversation with LCFA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).