



Episode 08: Why is the study of the immune system so important and what is the impact of that research?

Narrator:

Hi and welcome to Viewpoint with Dean Mary Klotman from the Duke University School of Medicine. Today we spoke with Dean Klotman and asked her why is the study of the immune system so important and what is the impact of that research?

Dean Klotman:

So this Translating Duke Health Initiative is quite broad. I mean we now know that an immune response really is part of almost all disease, particularly important in areas like infectious diseases, but also in autoimmune diseases. I think one of the most important breakthroughs in the last couple of years was really what came along in the field of cancer immunology, which was the development of checkpoint inhibitors, where we found that you could actually engage the immune system as a therapeutic approach to cancer.

So that opens up all sorts of possibilities. So this initiative really asks very broadly, how can we use what we know about controlling the immune system to apply it to understanding transplantation, and what will lead to more robust organ preservation? How can we use it to really, more efficiently and effectively, develop vaccines? How can we use it to, certainly more efficiently, develop therapeutics for cancer? So it's an exciting time for Immunology and it's largely because we really are developing tools to harness the immune system, both in terms of facilitating an immune response, but also regulating and controlling immune response.

Narrator:

Viewpoint is a production of the Duke University School of Medicine. Tune in each month for Dean Mary Klotman's thoughts and ideas about important and timely topics and issues related to medical education, science and discovery, and patient care.

For more information please visit medschool.duke.edu/viewpoint