At a Glance

- Tumor immunotherapy is a treatment that enhances the immune system to destroy cancer cells.
- Strategies to improve dendritic cell (DC) function include augmentation with granulocyte macrophage–colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF) use alone, in DC-based vaccines, as a vaccine adjuvant, or in combination therapy and may play a role in enhancing antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity.
- Nursing implications include the need to seek an understanding of the evolving uses of GM-CSF as a possible antitumor agent, to encourage patients to enter approved clinical trials, and to manage the care of those seeking emerging treatments.

DeMeyer & Buchsel, 2005). Table 1 lists current National Cancer Institute open trials involving DC therapy.

This article has several purposes. The first is to offer a brief discussion of the relationship between a defective immune system and cancer. An appreciation of the relationship is essential to enhancing the immune system to destroy cancer cells.

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