Lumanity | Cancer Progress 2025

Commercializing Uphill

Why Advanced Modalities Still Struggle to Reach Patients

The ***Commercializing Uphill*** panel at ***Cancer Progress 2025*** explored why advanced modalities—cell and gene therapies, radiopharmaceuticals, and others—remain so difficult to deliver at scale. What emerged was not a question of scientific potential, but of systemic readiness.

This article carries that dialogue forward, exploring how commercialization must evolve if science is to reach patients.

Cancer Progress brings **30+ years** of scientific discussions and connections.

Meet the Panel

MODERATOR

Martin Strebl-Bantillo, PhD | Principal, Strategy Consulting, Lumanity

Martin Strebl-Bantillo advises biopharma clients on commercialization strategy across oncology and transplant care. Trained as a chemist and radiochemist, he holds a PhD from Harvard and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at MGH/Harvard Medical School. His work bridges complex science with practical pathways to patient access.

PANELIST

Alan Bash | President, CARVYKTI® Franchise, Legend Biotech

Alan Bash leads the CARVYKTI® franchise at Legend Biotech, overseeing commercial, technical operations, and quality. He previously served as CEO of ZielBio and Checkmate Pharmaceuticals, and spent 23 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb, where he played a central role in the U.S. launch of Opdivo®.

PANELIST

Adriana Herrera | CEO, Pierre Fabre Pharmaceuticals (USA) (Formerly led U.S. operations at Kite Pharma)

Adriana Herrera is CEO of Pierre Fabre Pharmaceuticals (USA), responsible for building its U.S. presence in oncology and rare diseases. She previously led U.S. commercialization of Kite Pharma's CAR-T portfolio and held senior roles at Eisai, Novartis Oncology, and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

PANELIST

Laura A. Johnson, PhD | Chief Scientific Officer, Verismo Therapeutics

Laura Johnson is CSO of Verismo Therapeutics, a UPenn spinout advancing KIR-CAR-T therapies for solid tumors. A 20-year veteran of immunology and gene-engineered T-cell research, she trained under Dr. Steven Rosenberg at NCI and later led translational programs at Duke, UPenn, and GSK.

PANELIST

Edward C. Saltzman | Senior Strategic Advisor, Lumanity (founder, Defined Health)

Ed Saltzman is Senior Strategic Advisor at Lumanity and founder of Defined Health, a leading biotech strategy consultancy acquired in 2017. He has advised biopharma and investors for more than 25 years and serves on the board of Nurix Therapeutics and as a venture advisor to the Israel Biotech Fund.

PANELIST

John Wiggins | Vice President, Isotope Strategy, Lantheus Holdings

John Wiggins is VP of Isotope Strategy at Lantheus Holdings, where he directs strategy for isotope-based diagnostics and therapeutics. He brings expertise across radiopharmaceutical development, manufacturing, and clinical adoption.

Why

do so many groundbreaking therapies still struggle to reach patients?

Cell and gene therapies, radiopharmaceuticals, and other advanced modalities have redefined what is possible in oncology. These treatments can deliver outcomes once thought unimaginable—deep remissions, durable responses, even cures. Yet, even with nearly a decade of CAR-T experience and an even longer history for radiopharmaceuticals, commercialization remains an uphill climb.

The barriers are no longer scientific—they are systemic: manufacturing that can't keep pace, clinics unprepared for complex workflows, investors shifting away from long horizons, and patients left waiting—sometimes dying—when life-saving treatments were just within reach.

The annual ***Cancer Progress*** meeting convenes experts from across the globe to tackle these pervasive issues head-on. In 2025, the ***Commercializing Uphill*** panel, moderated by Martin Strebl-Bantillo of Lumanity's Strategy Consulting team, brought together leaders who see the challenge from every angle—bench to bedside, boardroom to clinic. Their insights converged on a single reality: commercialization models must evolve as quickly as the science, or progress for patients will stall. The panel made clear that the burden no longer rests on science itself, but on the business models and systems expected to deliver it.

> “The science is going to take care of itself, but the innovation in how we deliver and scale therapies is still stuck in neutral.” ***Edward Saltzman***

The Uphill Reality

The Burden of Proof Keeps Rising

For next-generation therapies, scientific data alone no longer clears the bar. The new test is whether treatments can scale—whether infrastructure, economics, and operations can sustain them once they leave the clinic. For smaller biotechs, bridging the gap from proof of concept to commercial readiness can be an existential hurdle.

Adriana Herrera, CEO of Pierre Fabre Pharmaceuticals (USA), captured the reality:

> “These are very complex therapies, and they’re novel from a regulatory perspective. Companies take on enormous risk to develop and get them approved, but the commercial payoff is still not assured.”

Her words reflect a shift across the field: the exuberance of early breakthroughs has given way to caution, particularly among investors. Fewer than 10% of unpartnered Phase 3 assets successfully secure pharma deals, despite high rates of clinical success. For small biotechs, that gap between clinical promise and commercial readiness can be a critical bottleneck.

And so, the burden of proof has shifted. Efficacy may win approval, but without viable pathways to scale, therapies remain out of reach—and patients are lost in the gap. However, radiopharmaceuticals are beginning to show that momentum can build, as commercialization challenges start to look solvable. Recent high-profile acquisitions signal that the industry believes systemic change is possible—and commercially attractive.

Access & Affordability

Bottlenecks with Human Consequences

Even when therapies do clear the regulatory bar, approval is not the finish line. Complex administration, limited treatment sites, and logistical hurdles continue to slow adoption—with devastating effects for patients.

For Legend Biotech's Carvykti®, a billion-dollar therapy, the challenge isn't demand but delivery. The treatment is concentrated in roughly 100 accredited centers, forcing many patients to travel long distances. Physicians must also navigate complex referral and contracting processes, creating a significant barrier to broader adoption.

For smaller biotechs, the barriers are even harsher. Laura Johnson of Verismo Therapeutics described the costs and delays that can leave patients without options:

"It costs about $400,000 just to make one patient's product. Some patients have died waiting for treatment because the process takes too long."

The commercialization gap isn't abstract—it is measured in lives lost.

The Dilemma

Personalization vs. Scale

The promise of cell, gene, and radioligand therapies is undeniable, but the challenge remains commercialization. As the panelists emphasized, the industry has yet to solve how to scale highly personalized medicines within systems built for standardized drugs—a one-size-fits-all model that was never designed to accommodate this level of complexity.

That paradox plays out across the field. Autologous CAR-T therapies, tailored for each patient, push the limits of manufacturing, distribution, and health-system capacity. Even allogeneic approaches, designed for off-the-shelf use, introduce new complexities around safety, logistics, and regulation.

Moderator Martin Strebl-Bantillo put it plainly: “These are marvelous technologies, but it’s hard to break the mold in already busy clinics.”

Adriana Herrera underscored that cell therapies, while transformative, carry significant regulatory and commercial risk. She noted that the field has shifted from early enthusiasm into a more cautious phase, as stakeholders confront the realities of cost, complexity, and scalability. Still, the patient impact demands continued progress—making this an area where investment and innovation must not stall.

The promise of personalization is dazzling. But until the industry can align it with models of scale, treatments that work for individuals may never work for the many.

The Progress

Signals of Adaptation

Amid the challenges, signs of progress are emerging. Education and guidelines have already transformed once “unmanageable” treatments—such as checkpoint inhibitors—into standard practice in community oncology. Providers are beginning to adapt similarly for cell therapies, developing specialty groups, care protocols, and training pathways to support delivery.

Companies are also showing what adaptation looks like in practice. Legend Biotech’s Carvykti® is one example: its compelling clinical data carried it forward, but commercial success still required heavy investment in manufacturing and center support.

Radiopharmaceuticals provide another model. As John Wiggins of Lantheus noted, their visibility is a strength, but adoption depends on overcoming supply-chain and manufacturing hurdles. Access is expanding through site start-up support and professional society advocacy—incremental steps that may be slow, but are proving effective.

Together, these signals suggest that adaptation is possible. Scaling them, however, will require coordinated change across science, business, and health systems.

"Our clinical data was so compelling that it carried us through to commercial success. But it wasn’t just the science—we had to invest heavily in manufacturing and center support to get there."

Alan Bash

The Next Steps

Commercialization Innovation

Emerging solutions are beginning to address the commercialization gap. Allogeneic and in vivo approaches aim to simplify logistics and shorten wait times. Digital ordering platforms are reducing administrative burden, though their proliferation risks overwhelming providers.

Some payers are piloting innovative reimbursement models that spread risk over time instead of requiring large upfront payments.

For biotechs, the lesson is clear: commercialization planning must begin earlier, not later. For investors, understanding where bottlenecks will hit is as important as evaluating trial data. For pharma, the bar is no longer just efficacy—it is proof that manufacturing, access, and economics can scale.

Commercialization innovation now matters as much as scientific innovation. Without it, even the most extraordinary therapies will advance scientifically but fail to reach patients.

Imperatives for Commercialization Progress

Together, these priorities determine not just how quickly innovation reaches patients, but how fully its promise is realized.

1. Bridge science and business

Commercialization must evolve alongside breakthroughs, not squeeze personalized medicines into outdated frameworks that can't match their complexity or cost.

2. Anticipate barriers early

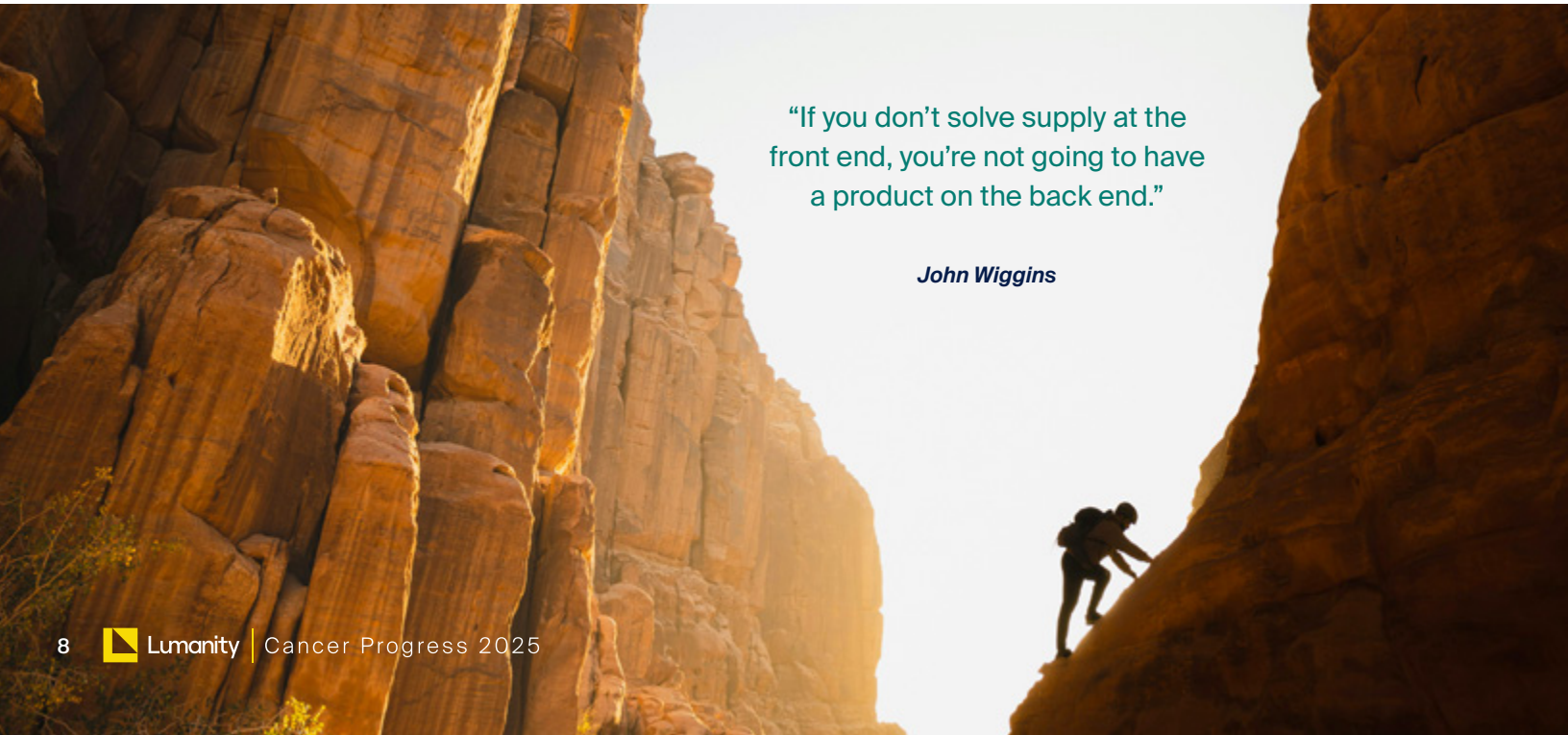
Bottlenecks around timelines, site capacity, referral pathways, and reimbursement must be identified before approval. Tackling these obstacles upfront is essential to ensure treatments reach more than a select few centers.

3. Build cross-modality strength

Radiopharmaceuticals, checkpoint inhibitors, and cell therapies show how infrastructure, education, and advocacy can speed adoption. Lessons from one field should be applied systematically to others.

4. Accelerate adoption

Expanding provider training, aligning payers, and introducing safer next-generation therapies will help health systems adapt more quickly. Without these steps, scientific progress will outpace patient access.



Conclusion

Evolving Models, Realizing Promise

Science is delivering breakthroughs at a breathtaking pace, but it cannot carry therapies the final stretch.

Without business models that anticipate access barriers, without systems prepared to scale complexity, and without investors willing to see value beyond the short term, patients will remain waiting. The system will continue to struggle to close the final gap.

The message from the panel was clear: commercialization must evolve as quickly as discovery. Progress in cancer treatment can no longer be measured in regulatory approvals alone—it must be measured in access. *That* is the benchmark the future demands.

The future of cancer treatment will be measured in access, not approvals.

Lumanity

We Engineer Breakthrough Value

We are committed to cracking the code on the future of healthcare by revolutionizing how value is generated, demonstrated, and communicated to unlock the full potential of your brand and your company. Our unique perspectives and agile approach equip you to thrive in an ever-changing healthcare marketplace by **accelerating and optimizing access to life-changing medicines.**

Commercialization

Navigate Complexities and Make Informed Choices That Unlock Breakthrough Value for Your Assets, Portfolios, and Organization

Our commercialization strategy experts work across therapeutic areas and throughout the product life cycle to develop strategic, fit-for-purpose solutions at the asset, portfolio, and corporate levels.

Recognized for our ability to guide high-stakes decisions, we de-risk development and accelerate commercial success. Our team of 200+ consultants, former industry leaders, scientists, and therapeutic area specialists brings innovative, multidimensional thinking to maximize your product's value.

By evaluating opportunities and setting direction, we transform ideas into action. We ensure that your product stands out in the market, your portfolios are future ready, and your organization is equipped to execute, scale, and thrive.

Our Offerings

- **Asset Identification and Shaping**
- **Asset Commercialization and Brand Optimization**
- **Organizational Scale Up and Development**
- **Corporate and Therapeutic Area Growth and Expansion**

Put our deep expertise, agility, and cross-functional collaboration to work for you.

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