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(54) Title: CYTOTOXIC CD44 ANTIBODY IMMUNOCONJUGATES

(57) Abstract: The present in invention relates to novel conjugates of antibodies with cytotoxic compounds, pharmaceutical compositions containing such conjugates, and their use in cancer therapy. In particular, the present invention relates to conjugates of antibodies which are specific for CD44 with maytansinoids, preferably with $N^{2'}$-deacetyl-$N^{2'}$ (3-mercapto-1-oxopropyl)-maytansine (DM1). In a particularly preferred embodiment, the antibody/maytansinoid conjugate may be prepared from a maytansinoid of formula (II) wherein R_1 represents H or SR_4, wherein R_4 represents methyl, ethy, linear alkyl, branched alkyl, cyclic alkyl, simple or substituted aryl, or heterocyclic; R_2 represents CI or H; R_3 represents H or CH_3; and m represents 1, 2, or 3. PLreferably, R_1 is H or CH_3, R_2 is CI, R_3 is CH_3, and m=2. The compound with R_1=H, R_2=CI, R_3=CH_3, and m=2 is designated DM1 in the literature.