

# Xcell Biosciences, UCSF to Evaluate Avatar Cell Culture System for Immunoprofiling

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NEW YORK (GenomeWeb) – Xcell Biosciences announced today that it has partnered with the University of California, San Francisco to conduct pilot studies evaluating the company's Avatar cell culture system and analytics platform in the immunoprofiling of cancer patients.

The Avatar is a desktop incubator system that allow scientists to customize oxygen, pressure, temperature, and CO2 levels to recreate a cell's native environment. The platform also features an animal serum-free, collagen-based hydrogel that promotes cellular binding in a 3D matrix, which also helps better mimic cells' natural environment.

Xcell has been [trying](#) to get the system in the hands of as many collaborators as possible recently, and has been working with UCSF researchers to compare gene and protein expression in circulating prostate cancer cells cultivated in the Avatar system with those obtained from traditional tumor biopsy to learn more about the underlying mechanisms of treatment response.

That relationship with UCSF has now been expanded to include new studies testing whether large-scale RNA profiling from peripheral blood and other patient-derived sample sources cultured in the Avatar system and correlated to clinical outcomes can predict a patient's response to first- or second-line treatments in prostate, bladder, and kidney cancers, Xcell said.

"We are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity to use the Avatar system to compare results from liquid biopsies to actual tissue biopsies," UCSF researcher and Xcell collaborator Charles Ryan said in a statement. "We also are optimistic about the ability to use the system to look at broad-scale genomic alterations in cancer patients without the necessity for looking at circulating tumor cells, cell-free DNA, or tissue biopsies."

Specific terms of the arrangement were not disclosed.

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