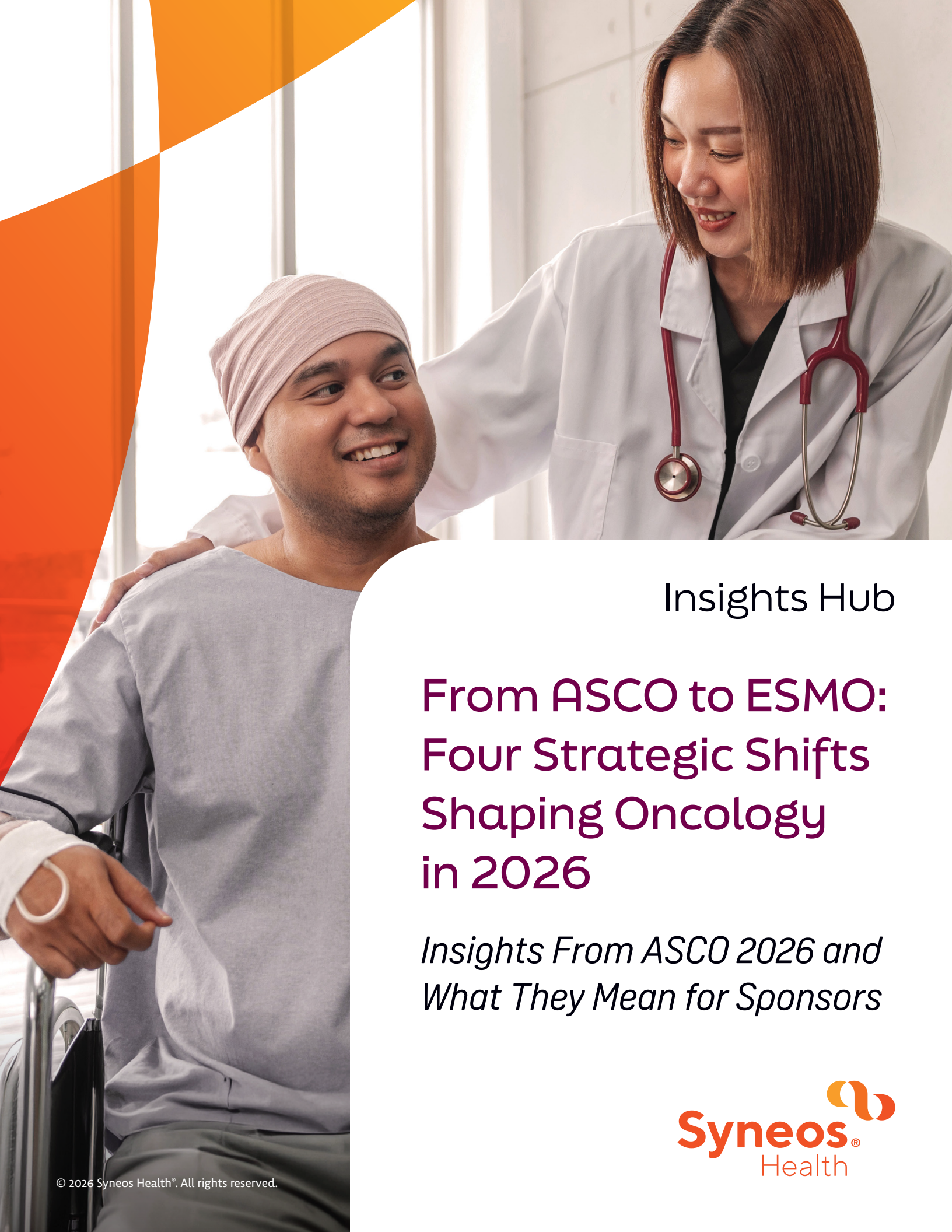




Insights Hub

From ASCO to ESMO: Four Strategic Shifts Shaping Oncology in 2026

*Insights From ASCO 2026 and
What They Mean for Sponsors*





2026 ASCO Sets the Stage for the Upcoming Months

The 2026 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) annual meeting demonstrated that oncology is entering a new phase of clinical development. Rather than being remembered for a single breakthrough, ASCO 2026 highlighted a series of strategic shifts that are reshaping how oncology therapies are discovered, developed and delivered.

As the industry looks ahead to the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) in October, sponsors should focus less on individual readouts and more on the strategic trends likely to influence clinical development over the next 12–24 months.

AI Is Becoming Foundational Infrastructure

WHAT CHANGED AT ASCO

AI moved beyond proof of concept at ASCO 2026. Rather than focusing on future possibilities, discussions centered on practical applications already improving clinical development, translational research and trial operations.

The conversation has shifted from whether AI belongs in oncology to how it can improve scientific and operational decision-making.

Surveyed oncologists that participated in the 2026 ASCO Impact Report from Syneos Health identified multimodal AI and AI-enabled precision oncology implementation as the AI applications most likely to influence routine oncology practice over the next 12–24 months, highlighting a shift from AI exploration to practical clinical adoption.

WHY IT MATTERS

AI's greatest value won't come from isolated tools. It will come from connecting clinical, molecular and operational data to support faster, more informed development decisions.

WHAT SPONSORS SHOULD WATCH

-  AI-enabled trial design
-  Connected data ecosystems
-  Multimodal biomarker integration
-  Emerging regulatory expectations

KEY TAKEAWAY

AI is becoming foundational infrastructure for oncology development. Organizations that combine connected data with scientific expertise may be better positioned to realize the value of these approaches.



A SOUND STRATEGY

“The system is failing the very patients it's built to serve.”

—Kent Thoele, CEO at Paradigm Health, Syneos Health® Podcast: Early Signals



FEATURED RESOURCE

The Syneos Health Podcast:
Early Signals | Can AI Finally
Rebuild Clinical Research?





A SOUND STRATEGY

“We want to diminish the uncertainty in management and drug development as much as possible.”

—Ezra Cohen, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Tempus AI, Syneos Health
Podcast: Early Signals



FEATURED RESOURCE

On-Demand Webinar:
Executing MRD in Oncology Trials



Precision Oncology Is Moving Beyond Genomics

WHAT CHANGED AT ASCO

Precision oncology is evolving beyond identifying a single actionable mutation. At ASCO 2026, the conversation expanded to include circulating biomarkers, longitudinal disease monitoring and multimodal data as tools to guide treatment decisions throughout the patient journey.

Biomarkers are increasingly being used to optimize dose selection, monitor treatment response and support adaptive clinical development.

ASCO EVIDENCE

Daraxonrasib (RASolute 302) demonstrated how next-generation targeted therapies against previously undruggable targets are reshaping precision oncology. It was identified by surveyed oncologists as the most important clinical data presented at ASCO 2026, reinforcing the continued momentum behind biomarker-driven development.

WHY IT MATTERS

The next generation of precision oncology may increasingly depend on integrating multiple sources of biological evidence to support smarter development decisions and more personalized care.

WHAT TO WATCH AT ESMO

- ✓ Expanded use of minimal residual disease (MRD) as a clinical endpoint
- ✓ Greater integration of circulating tumor DNA into treatment decisions
- ✓ Multimodal biomarker strategies
- ✓ Continued evolution of adaptive precision oncology trials

KEY TAKEAWAY

Precision oncology is becoming a longitudinal development strategy. Sponsors that integrate biomarkers across the clinical development lifecycle will be better positioned to make more informed development decisions.

Platform Technologies Are Redefining Competitive Advantage

WHAT CHANGED AT ASCO

ASCO 2026 demonstrated that oncology innovation is increasingly being driven by platform technologies rather than individual therapies. Ivonescimab (HARMONi-6), one of the meeting's highest-rated clinical presentations, highlighted sustained momentum behind next-generation therapeutic platforms, while advances in antibody drug conjugates (ADCs), in vivo cell therapies, direct myelocytomatosis (MYC) inhibition and oncolytic viruses have underscored the industry's shift toward scalable innovation.

ASCO EVIDENCE

Ivonescimab (HARMONi-6) and advances in next-generation ADCs underscored the industry's shift toward platform-based innovation. The ASCO 2026 Impact Survey also found that novel small molecules and ADCs generated the highest levels of excitement among surveyed oncologists, reinforcing continued investment in scalable therapeutic platforms.

WHY IT MATTERS

Platform technologies offer sponsors the opportunity to expand indications, generate follow-on assets and create longer-term portfolio value. As scientific differentiation becomes more difficult, platform scalability may become just as important as individual clinical results.

WHAT TO WATCH AT ESMO

- ✓ Next-generation ADC data
- ✓ In vivo cell therapy development
- ✓ Novel platform technologies entering later-stage trials
- ✓ Early evidence supporting new therapeutic classes

KEY TAKEAWAY

Platform technologies are shifting competition from individual assets to repeatable innovation. Sponsors that build scalable development platforms may be better positioned to support long-term pipeline growth.



A SOUND STRATEGY

"Only by breaking new mechanisms can we really bring cancer care forward."

—Nick Glover, CEO at MycRX,
Syneos Health Podcast: Early Signals



FEATURED RESOURCE

The Syneos Health Podcast:
Early Signals | Therapeutic:
The Promise of Direct
MYC Inhibition





A SOUND STRATEGY

“Patients who might be best served by a clinical trial often cannot get access.”

—Kent Thelke, CEO at Paradigm Health, Syneos Health Podcast: Early Signals



FEATURED RESOURCE

Syneos Health Podcast |
Site Realities Series



Clinical Research Is Moving Closer to Patients

WHAT CHANGED AT ASCO

Scientific innovation is increasingly being matched by operational innovation. ASCO 2026 highlighted a growing emphasis on making clinical research more accessible through community oncology networks, electronic health record (EHR)-enabled recruitment and more patient-centered trial infrastructure.

Rather than asking patients to adapt to clinical trials, sponsors are increasingly designing trials around the realities of patient care. Surveyed oncologists identified gastrointestinal, lung and breast cancers as the disease areas most likely to experience meaningful changes in clinical practice following ASCO 2026. This growing clinical momentum will require operational models capable of translating innovation into routine care.

WHY IT MATTERS

Future oncology trials may increasingly depend on more than strong science. Success will increasingly be determined by an organization's ability to identify patients earlier, reduce operational burden on sites and patients, and deliver studies where patients already receive care.

Organizations that connect clinical strategy with operational execution may be better positioned to support enrollment, evidence generation and broader patient access.

WHAT TO WATCH AT ESMO

- ✓ Community-based oncology research
- ✓ EHR-enabled patient identification
- ✓ Decentralized and hybrid trial models
- ✓ Site-focused operational innovation

KEY TAKEAWAY

Clinical research is moving closer to patients. Sponsors that combine scientific innovation with operational excellence may be better positioned to support trial access, enrollment and execution.

ESMO Will Separate Promise From Practice

ASCO 2026 highlighted clear momentum across AI, precision oncology, platform technologies and patient-centered clinical research. ESMO 2026 will provide the next opportunity to determine which of these advances demonstrate the evidence, scalability and operational readiness to influence future standards of care.

LOOKING AHEAD TO ESMO

The Syneos Health ASCO 2026 Impact Survey found broad enthusiasm for next-generation small molecules, ADCs, multimodal AI and biomarker-guided precision oncology, underscoring that the industry’s focus has shifted from isolated breakthroughs to scalable innovation.

WHAT SPONSORS SHOULD WATCH

Strategic Shift	Key Question for ESMO
 AI	Where is AI delivering measurable value across clinical development?
 Precision Oncology	Which biomarkers are ready to influence routine treatment decisions?
 Platform Technologies	Which therapeutic platforms are demonstrating durable differentiation?
 Clinical Research	What patient-centered approaches are improving trial performance at scale?

ACTIONS TO TAKE BEFORE ESMO

-  Build connected data strategies that support AI-enabled development
-  Expand biomarker strategies beyond patient selection to guide longitudinal decision-making
-  Evaluate platform technologies for long-term scientific and commercial differentiation
-  Strengthen operational capabilities that improve patient access and trial execution

KEY TAKEAWAY

ASCO revealed where oncology is heading. ESMO will help determine which advances are ready to shape the next generation of oncology clinical development.



INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

“Fifty years from now, cancer will be reclassified based on biology.”

—Vivek Subbiah, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, Stanford University, Syneos Health Podcast: Early Signals



FEATURED RESOURCE

ASCO 2026 Impact Survey:
Reshaping Treatment Decisions for Oncology Future Standards of Care



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ABOUT THE SYNEOS HEALTH INSIGHTS HUB

The Syneos Health Insights Hub generates future-focused, actionable insights to help biopharmaceutical companies better execute and succeed in a constantly evolving environment. Driven by dynamic research, our perspectives focus on real answers to customer challenges to guide decision-making and investment.

ABOUT SYNEOS HEALTH

To learn more about how we are **Shortening the distance from lab to life®**, visit syneoshealth.com or [subscribe to our podcast](#).

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