

Study: Cancer Drug Gleevec has heart risk

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U.S. scientists say the cancer-fighting drug Gleevec -- remarkably successful in treating leukemia -- can lead to heart failure in some patients.

Researchers who conducted the study recommend patients taking Gleevec be monitored for heart-failure symptoms, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday, noting the scientists also urge similar drugs in development be tested for evidence for heart toxicity.

Gleevec is a targeted therapy, designed to attack only cancerous cells, while avoiding tissue damage in the rest of the body.

Dr. Jean-Bernard Durand, a cardiologist at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and an author of the study told The Journal that unlike chemotherapy, "The idea was that (targeted therapies) would limit collateral damage, when in fact we're finding that other tissues can be affected by this model."

Novartis AG, which manufactures Gleevec, said clinical trials and other studies have shown the incidence of heart failure involving Gleevec is "extremely rare."

The study appears in the journal Nature Medicine.

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