

Brain tumor vaccine has promising results

November 22 2006

U.S. cancer researchers say a vaccine for treating a recurrent brain cancer known as glioma has shown promising results in preliminary clinical trials.

Findings from the first group of six patients in the study -- being conducted at the University of California-San Francisco's Brain Tumor Research Center -- involved vitespen (trademarked as Oncophage), a vaccine made from the patient's own tumor.

The trial's preliminary results indicate the vaccine was associated with tumor-specific immune response in patients with recurrent, high-grade glioma.

Glioma is a type of primary tumor that arises from the glial cells -- the connective tissue cells that surround and support nerve cells. The most common site of involvement of a glioma is the brain. Malignant glioma is currently a fatal disease.

"This is the first documentation of a glioma-specific immune response after vaccination with vitespen," said Dr. Andrew Parsa, assistant professor in the University of California-San Francisco Department of Neurological Surgery and principal investigator of the trial. Based on the preliminary findings, a larger phase 2 study is planned for 2007.

The trial results were presented last week in Orlando, Fla., during a meeting sponsored by the Society of Neuro-Oncology.

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Citation: Brain tumor vaccine has promising results (2006, November 22) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-11-brain-tumor-vaccine-results.html>

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