

Drug helps brain tumor patients live longer

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People who receive high doses of the chemotherapy drug methotrexate to treat a certain type of brain tumor appear to live longer than people receiving other treatments, according to research published in the January 29, 2008, issue of *Neurology*.

“Our findings show high-dose methotrexate alone or in combination with other chemotherapy drugs is the most effective treatment available for primary central nervous system lymphoma (PCNSL)” said study author Tracy Batchelor, MD, with the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center in Boston. PCNSL can be a potentially curable brain tumor or one in which there can be a long remission.

The research involved 25 adults with newly diagnosed PCNSL who received a high dose of methotrexate every two weeks for four months or until there were no signs of the brain tumor. The participants were then followed for a minimum of 6.5 years.

The article found 52 percent of the participants achieved complete remission and 40 percent of these patients have not relapsed after an average of seven years. The average survival rate of all participants who received methotrexate was 4.5 years. In contrast, the average survival rate for patients who receive radiation therapy for this type of brain tumor is one year.

“Our findings support the role of methotrexate as a critical chemotherapy drug in the treatment of this type of brain tumor,” said Batchelor. “Moreover, it appears some people may achieve a long

remission through the methotrexate alone.”

Batchelor says further studies are needed to identify the optimal methotrexate dose and combination therapy that will produce the most effective results with minimum side effects.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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