

# New investigational compound targets pancreatic cancer cells

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A new investigational drug designed to penetrate and attack pancreatic cancer cells has been administered to a patient for the first time ever at the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare.

ASG-5ME is a potent, targeted compound designed to selectively kill [cancer cells](#), says Daniel Von Hoff, MD, a principal investigator in the Phase I clinical trial. Pancreatic cancer is a fast-growing and difficult to treat form of cancer, and is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in the United States.

"ASG-5ME is intended for pancreatic cancer patients who do not have a good prognosis with currently available therapies. We are very pleased to be able to offer this exciting agent in a clinical trial for patients with advanced pancreatic cancer," says Dr. Von Hoff. "Our goal at the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center is to deliver cell-killing medicine through the best possible individually targeted therapies, and ASG-5ME fits the bill."

The new investigational compound uses a monoclonal antibody against a target which is found in more than 90 percent of pancreatic cancer patients. The monoclonal antibody delivers a highly potent molecule called monomethyl auristatin E (MMAE) to selectively kill the pancreatic cancer cells.

"It is a precision approach that is designed to avoid non-targeted cells, increasing antitumor activity in preclinical models and potentially

reducing the [toxic effects](#) of traditional chemotherapy" says Dr. Von Hoff. Researchers are studying the drug to evaluate its safety and tolerability and identify the maximum tolerated dose.

The Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare was the first to offer patient access to ASG-5ME. Researchers hope to enroll up to 50 patients in clinical trials of the drug in multiple centers across the U.S.

The drug was co-developed by Seattle Genetics, Inc. of Bothell, Wash. and Agensys, Inc., an affiliate of Tokyo-based Astellas Pharma Inc.

More than 36,000 people are expected to die from pancreatic cancer in 2010, according to the American Cancer Society. Most patients with advanced [pancreatic cancer](#) die within one year of diagnosis.

The Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare opened in 2001 as the first major cancer center in greater Phoenix to offer comprehensive cancer research, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and support services in a single location. The Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons has awarded Accreditation with Commendation to the Scottsdale Healthcare cancer program.

Dr. Von Hoff is chief scientific officer at the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare and physician-in-chief at the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen).

Research at the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare is conducted in collaboration with TGen and the Scottsdale Healthcare Research Institute, allowing molecular and genomic discoveries to reach the patient bedside as quickly as possible through clinical trials of therapies directed at specific targets in a patient's tumor.

Provided by Scottsdale Healthcare

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