

## UCI non-small cell lung cancer study highlights advances in targeted drug therapy

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A UC Irvine oncologist's work with a targeted therapy is showing great promise in patients with a deadly form of lung cancer. The results were published Thursday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The multicenter study is testing whether the drug crizotinib effectively slows, stops or reverses growth in advanced non-small cell <u>lung cancer</u> tumors by targeting a genetic mutation that causes uncontrolled tumor growth. Study participants all tested positive for a mutation in the anaplastic lymphoma kinase gene.

According to the findings, tumors disappeared or shrank in 57 percent of patients. Tumors ceased growing in another 33 percent. The response rate to the current standard of care for advanced non-small cell lung cancer is about 15 percent.

"For the majority of patients, the treatment right now is chemotherapy plus targeted therapy in those eligible," said Dr. Ignatius Ou. "In the future, with the advance of personalized medicine, we hope to be able to identify specific genetic change in the lung cancer and treat patients with specific inhibitors that can improve <u>survival rates</u> and quality of life."

The <u>New England Journal of Medicine</u> article includes data from 82 patients treated in Phase 1 of this study, sponsored by the pharmaceutical company Pfizer. The targeted genetic mutation is particularly prevalent among those who have never smoked. Study participants ranged in age from 25 to 78, with 76 percent of them



nonsmokers.

Ou treated 15 patients in UCI's Phase 1 trial, most from Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. One person came from Arizona each month for treatment and assessment. Ou is currently enrolling patients in Phase 2 and 3 trials for crizotinib. Interested candidates should contact the UCI clinical trials office at 714-456-6241.

Each year, about 1.5 million new cases of lung cancer are diagnosed globally. Nearly 75 percent of people with non-small cell lung cancer are diagnosed at an advanced stage, for which the five-year survival rate is only 6 percent.

Recent cancer research emphasizes targeting, or personalizing, treatment through molecular analysis of a tumor and the use of a specific drug to inhibit genetic expression. Conventional chemotherapy bombards a tumor with multiple drugs.

According to the National Cancer Institute, because targeted cancer therapies are more selective for cancer cells, they may harm fewer normal cells, reduce side effects and improve quality of life.

Provided by University of California - Irvine

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