

Researchers present new findings for novel pancreatic cancer vaccine

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A novel pancreatic cancer vaccine shows promise in improving survival when added to standard treatment, according to new research out of University Hospitals Case Medical Center's Seidman Cancer Center and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. The Phase 2 data was presented today at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, part of Digestive Disease Week in San Diego.

In the plenary session titled "Addition of Algenpantucel-L Immunotherapy to Standard Adjuvant Therapy for Pancreatic Cancer: a Phase 2 Study" (Tuesday, May 22, 8:00 a.m. PT Abstract # 028), Jeffrey Hardacre, MD, lead investigator, presented the updated data. The multi-site, nationwide study involved 70 patients with resected pancreatic cancer and suggests improvement in 12-month disease-free and overall survival.

"Pancreatic cancer is a deadly disease with long-term survival less than 5%," says Dr. Hardacre, [surgical oncologist](#) with UH Case Medical Center and Associate Professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. "Better treatments are needed to improve survival and we are encouraged by the promising results of this [vaccine therapy](#)."

The vaccine, known as Algenpantucel-L, is unique from other approaches in that it is designed to trigger the patient's own immune system to destroy [cancer cells](#). Algenpantucel-L, developed by NewLink Genetics Corporation, was added to standard adjuvant therapy for patients who have successfully undergone pancreatic surgical resection.

A pivotal, nationwide Phase 3 study of the vaccine, also led in part by Dr. Hardacre, has begun and will involve up to 722 patients.

Cancer of the pancreas is the fourth leading cause of [cancer death](#) in the United States, killing more than 35,000 Americans each year. Pancreatic cancer is characteristically aggressive with non-specific initial symptoms, making it difficult to diagnose early. Conventional therapies have little impact on prognosis and disease outcome. Surgical resection of the tumor is currently the only chance for a cure. Without resection, overall median survival is four to six months with an estimated five-year survival rate of 0.4 percent to 5 percent.

"Patients with [pancreatic cancer](#) have limited options and there have been few advances for this lethal disease in recent years," says Stan Gerson, MD, Director of the UH Seidman Cancer Center and the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center at Case Western Reserve University. "We are proud that Jeff and our cancer center have played such a significant role in investigating this promising new treatment option."

More information: The full abstract is available at:
meetings.ssat.com/abstracts/2012/O28.cgi

Provided by University Hospitals Case Medical Center

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