

Trial offers new hope to children and adults with muscle cancer

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A Cancer Research UK funded [trial](#) will offer new treatments for children and adults with a form of muscle cancer called [rhabdomyosarcoma](#) that has returned or does not respond to current treatments.

Only around one in three patients with rhabdomyosarcoma that returns respond to treatment with the [chemotherapy drugs](#) vincristine and [irinotecan](#). This trial will test if adding the [chemotherapy](#) drug temozolomide will give better response rates and help more people survive the disease.

Temozolomide was [first developed](#) by [Cancer](#) Research UK scientists to treat brain tumours.

Dr Julia Chisholm, who will lead the trial at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Current treatments have had good success in treating rhabdomyosarcoma and over 70 per cent of patients survive the disease. But, we urgently need [new drugs](#) to offer patients a better chance of beating the disease if it comes back.

"Studies in the US have suggested that vincristine and irinotecan can be used to treat rhabdomyosarcoma that has returned and we want to see if adding temozolomide helps even more patients. If successful, this trial will form the basis for a new standard treatment across Europe to which new targeted drugs can be added as they're developed."

The drug, temozolomide, works by stopping [cancer cells](#) making DNA, ultimately stopping the cancer's ability to grow.

The phase II trial will recruit 80 patients across Europe and will be led in the UK by doctors at The Royal Marsden. The trial will be open to patients at eleven hospitals across the UK and will include children and adults up to the age of 50.

The trial is being co-ordinated by the Cancer Research UK Children's [Cancer Trials](#) Team, based at the University of Birmingham.

Rhabdomyosarcoma is a cancer that starts in the muscles and can be diagnosed in both children and adults. The treatments used include surgery, chemotherapy, and [radiotherapy](#) depending on the type of rhabdomyosarcoma and how aggressive the cancer is. Each year around 55 children in Britain and 30 adults in England are diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma. Survival rates in children are just over 60 per cent but survival rates are worse in adults.

This trial launch coincides with Stand Up To Cancer a partnership between Cancer Research UK and Channel 4 that will unite scientists,

celebrities and communities across the country to generate funds, raise awareness and bring forward the day when all cancers are cured.

Kate Law, director of clinical research at Cancer Research UK, said:
"Temozolomide was first developed by Cancer Research UK scientists to treat [brain tumours](#) over 30 years ago. This trial shows how new uses can be found for drugs originally developed for one type of cancer, helping to treat more people with the disease. By funding trials which would not be possible otherwise, Cancer Research UK aims to help more children beat cancer."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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