

# Docetaxel significantly increases survival for incurable gastric cancers

January 23 2013

---



Survival for advanced stomach and oesophagael cancer patients increases by 40 per cent when treated with the chemotherapy drug, Docetaxel – providing evidence to prescribe it as a second-line treatment, according to the results of a Cancer Research UK trial presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Gastrointestinal cancers symposium today (Wednesday).

Patients with the advanced disease who do not respond to the initial standard treatment of platinum and fluoropyrimidine chemotherapy have very low survival – around four months. And in all patients with advanced disease and most of those with early disease (70 per cent) their cancer will eventually progress further after chemotherapy.

But these new results show that patients taking [Docetaxel](#) lived, on average, more than 40 per cent longer – 5.2 months compared with 3.6 months. The drug improved symptoms, without affecting quality of life.

Docetaxel is a chemotherapy drug usually given to treat breast, prostate and non-small cell lung cancer.

The trial, called [COUGAR-02](#) was coordinated by the Cambridge [Cancer Trials](#) Centre at Addenbrooke's hospital.

It recruited 168 patients from 31 UK hospitals with incurable oesophageal or stomach cancer after initial therapy.

They were then randomly assigned either chemotherapy for up to 18 weeks with Docetaxel, or symptom-control treatment with no chemotherapy.

Chief investigator Dr Hugo Ford, Cancer Research UK-funded clinician at Cambridge University Hospitals, said: "This is important progress for stomach and [oesophageal cancer](#) patients. At the moment there aren't any options for [gastric cancer](#) patients whose first round of treatments haven't worked and there's an urgent need for new drugs.

"But for the first time we've shown that giving further chemotherapy can not only improve survival but also maintain quality of life and reduce pain.

"It's incredibly hard as a clinician telling a patient with advanced disease that there are no treatments that will work for them. So it's fantastic that these results will provide new hope and valuable extra time for people and their families who otherwise would have no option other than pain management drugs."

Each year more than 12,000 people die from oesophagus or stomach cancer in the UK. Stomach cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide.

Kate Law, Cancer Research UK's director of clinical research, said:  
"These exciting results from our trial provide the evidence that Docetaxel is effective when patient's initial treatment for advanced stomach cancer wasn't effective.

"Our scientists were among the first to show that the major cause of stomach cancer is a common infection of the stomach lining by the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). This work has underpinned current research aimed at preventing [stomach cancer](#). And we're delighted that this latest study will provide new, long overdue treatment options for these patients.

"We hope that Docetaxel can be made available on the NHS as soon as possible to treat the disease."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Docetaxel significantly increases survival for incurable gastric cancers (2013, January 23) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-01-docetaxel-significantly-survival-incurable-gastric.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--