Gleevec's latest approval is for pediatric cancer

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(HealthDay)—The anti-cancer drug Gleevec (imatinib) has received new U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval to treat the most common type of pediatric cancer, affecting some 2,900 children each year, the agency said Friday.

Philadelphia chromosome positive acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) progresses rapidly if left untreated. Gleevec, among a class of drugs called tyrosine kinase inhibitors, blocks proteins that promote development of cancer cells, the FDA said in a news release.

The most common side effects observed in pediatric testing included infection and a decrease in white blood cells and blood platelets.

Gleevec was first approved in 2001 to treat a form of chronic myeloid leukemia, and has since been approved to treat several other conditions. The drug is marketed by Novartis, based in East Hanover, N.J.

More information: To learn more about Gleevec, visit the U.S. National Cancer Institute.