

# New drug treatment for form of lethal cancer is approved

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A new drug has been approved to battle mantle cell lymphoma, an aggressive cancer often fatal because of its resistance to treatment, after a study led by a Hackensack University Medical Center physician showed it can stop the progression of the disease in about a quarter of the patients.

Revlimid, a drug taken orally, was granted approval by the Food and Drug Administration last month after a study led by Dr. Andre Goy involving 134 [patients](#) showed 26 percent of patients responded to the medication. Nine patients showed a complete remission by the end of the clinical trial, according to the FDA.

Before the study, all of the patients had been treated with chemotherapy and their disease had either never regressed or had returned, Goy said.

"Patients were heavily pretreated and were a poor risk," Goy said. "That's why this is so important. Many of these patients had few other options."

The drug's side effects caused 76 patients to interrupt treatment for at least one dose and caused 19 patients to discontinue treatment. Among the adverse effects are decreases in [white blood cells](#) or platelets, anemia, diarrhea, nausea, rash and fatigue, according to National Institutes of Health.

Lymphoma is a type of cancer that affects certain white blood cells,

called lymphocytes. Mantle cell lymphoma is a specific kind of the disease typically found in the lymph nodes, spleen, marrow and blood. It is rare and usually aggressive, with a median survival rate of only four to five years.

The disease affects nearly 4,000 Americans each year and occurs more frequently in males, usually in their mid-60s. Symptoms include, among other conditions, a loss of appetite and weight loss, fever, night sweats, nausea and/or vomiting, abdominal pain or bloating, or discomfort due to enlarged tonsils.

Revlimid, which works primarily by stimulating the immune system to fight the cancer, has been approved at this time only for those patients who have relapsed with the disease.

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