

New drug extends life in women with advanced ovarian cancer

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Women with ovarian cancer that has returned after previous treatment had their life extended by almost three months after treatment with a drug called Cediranib, according to trial results presented today at the National Cancer Research (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Liverpool.

The Cancer Research UK-funded phase III clinical trial found that patients given Cediranib with chemotherapy gained an extra 3.2 months before their cancer progressed (from 9.4 to 12.6 months). And, on average, women survived for an extra three months, from 17.6 to 20.3 months compared to women only given chemotherapy.

Professor Jonathan Ledermann, chief investigator based at the Cancer Research UK UCL centre, said: "While the increase in survival may seem modest, this is a significant finding for women with advanced ovarian cancer. Cediranib is the first [drug](#) of its kind that has been shown to delay tumour progression and improve overall survival in ovarian cancer that has returned."

Cediranib, which is taken in pill form, is a type of drug called a tyrosine kinase inhibitor that stops tumours from being able to make new blood vessels that are essential for cancer growth.

In women whose ovarian cancer has returned and treated with the standard platinum-based chemotherapy it normally takes eight to nine months before the cancer starts to grow again. But when treated with Cediranib this was extended to over 12 months.

A total of 456 patients whose ovarian cancer had returned were enrolled in the trial at 63 centres from the UK, Canada, Australia and Spain. They were randomised to receive platinum-based chemotherapy together with a placebo, or 20 mg a day of Cediranib during chemotherapy followed by placebo for 18 months, or 20 mg a day of Cediranib during chemotherapy followed by Cediranib as a maintenance treatment.

Professor Matt Seymour, NCRI clinical research director, said: "These results are very encouraging. They show clearly that this new drug, which works in a totally different way to conventional chemotherapy, can significantly help patients with ovarian cancer. The average benefit is modest – around 3 months – but worthwhile; and in the future it may be possible to identify who gains most from this drug.

"It is also important to remember that, like most cancer treatment, progress in ovarian cancer is incremental. Over time, the small benefits from many different research programmes like this add together to make a huge difference to patients' lives."

Each year around 7,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the UK and despite ovarian cancer survival almost doubling in the last 30 years the survival rate remains at 43 per cent.

Kate Law, Cancer Research UK's director of [clinical research](#), said: "Ovarian cancer can be hard to diagnose early and treat successfully, so it's significant that this study found a drug that can slow tumour growth following [chemotherapy](#) treatment. We urgently need better treatments for [ovarian cancer](#) and it's promising that this [treatment](#) appears to also give [women](#) valuable extra months of life. It's only through research like this that we can beat cancer sooner."

The ICON 6 trial was co-ordinated by the MRC Clinical trials unit at UCL and was also funded by AstraZeneca.

More information: conference.ncri.org.uk/abstracts/abstracts/LB80.htm

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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