Treatment extends life for men with prostate cancer

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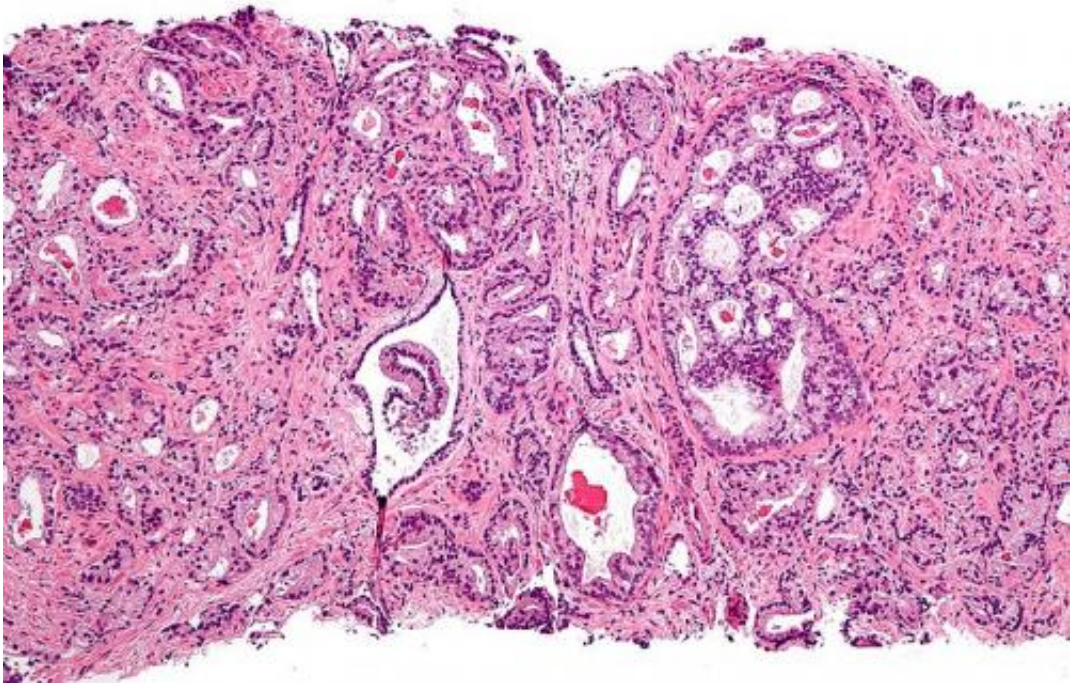

Micrograph showing prostatic acinar adenocarcinoma (the most common form of prostate cancer) Credit: Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0

A new treatment has been shown to extend the lifespans of men with advanced prostate cancer by as much as one year, researchers said Sunday.

The study involved 790 men who were diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer, meaning the disease had spread beyond the prostate.

By adding the chemotherapy drug docetaxel to standard hormone therapy, known as androgen deprivation therapy (ADT), fewer patients died and many lived longer.

After 29 months, 136 men had died in the ADT alone group and 101 in the combination group.

The median, or midpoint, overall survival for the ADT group was 44 months, while those who also received docetaxel lived 57.6 months.

ADT is an effective therapy but eventually most patients become resistant to it, allowing the cancer to spread.

Some 30,000 men die of hormone-resistant prostate cancer each year in the United States.

"Hormone therapy has been a standard treatment for prostate cancer since the 1950s," said lead study author Christopher Sweeney of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Massachusetts.

"This is the first study to identify a strategy that prolongs survival in newly diagnosed metastatic prostate cancer," he added, describing the benefit as "substantial."

The research was presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology annual conference.

"These results demonstrate how we can use 'old tools' in new, more powerful ways to improve and extend patients' lives," said ASCO president Clifford Hudis.