FDA clears Avastin for late-stage cervical cancer

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The Food and Drug Administration has approved Genentech's Avastin for a new use against late-stage cervical cancer, the sixth indication for the blockbuster biotech drug.

The FDA approved the drug late Thursday for women with cervical cancer that is persistent, recurrent or has spread to other parts of the body. The disease is usually caused by the human papillomavirus, which is spread through sexual contact and causes cells to become cancerous.

The National Cancer Institute estimates that over 12,300 U.S. women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year and 4,000 will die from the disease.

Avastin works by choking off blood vessels that help new cancer cells grow. The new use for cervical cancer is approved in combination with the chemotherapy drugs paclitaxel and cisplatin or in combination with paclitaxel and topotecan.

Avastin is already approved for various forms of colon cancer, lung cancer, glioblastoma and kidney cancer. The drug had global 2013 sales of $6.25 billion.

California-based Genentech is a unit of Swiss drugmaker Roche.