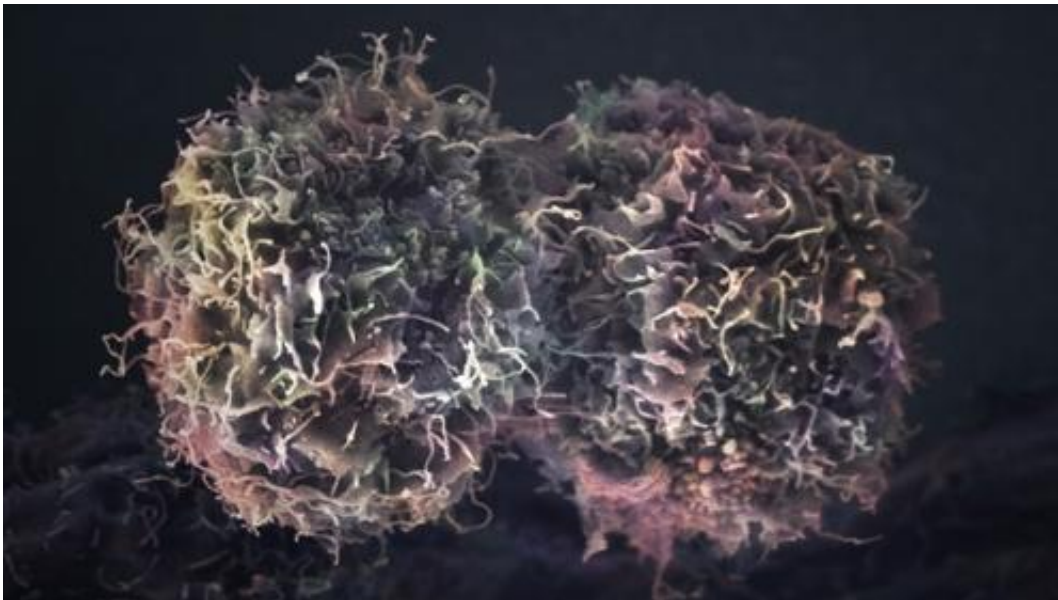


Study confirms long-term benefits of melanoma immunotherapy

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A long-term follow up of people on an international clinical trial has confirmed the benefit of immunotherapy for certain patients with advanced (stage 3 or 4) melanoma.

More than 18 per cent of patients were still alive five years after being treated with ipilimumab (Yervoy) in combination with a chemotherapy drug called dacarbazine.

This compared to fewer than nine per cent who were treated with chemo alone.

Ipilimumab is one of a new class of cancer treatments that target the immune system, and works by homing in on a molecule found on [immune cells](#) called CTLA-4. This relieves the molecular 'brakes' on a patient's immune system, allowing it to attack their cancer.

The study, which began recruiting patients 2006 – including several from the UK - also confirmed low rates of serious side-effects among patients who took the drug long-term.

The latest analysis "represents one of the longest follow-up survival analyses of an approved treatment for advanced melanoma", according to its authors, who published their findings in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Following the publication of the first (three year) analysis of the trial results in June 2011, ipilimumab was approved in December 2012 by the [National Institute of Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) for use on the NHS in England and Wales. Scotland approved it in early 2013.

Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician and an expert in [cancer immunotherapy](#), welcomed the new figures.

"This is an important finding. We knew that a minority of patients given ipilimumab respond well to the drug. But this confirms that the remissions can last for a long time, which is of course what you'd like to see from drugs that stimulate [immune response](#)," he said.

"It's an exciting time for [immunotherapy](#), as the years of hard work in the lab bear fruit, and with several promising new drugs in the pipeline. Working out how best to combine them, and who will benefit most, are

the next big challenges."

More information: Maio M. (2015). "Five-Year Survival Rates for Treatment-Naive Patients With Advanced Melanoma Who Received Ipilimumab Plus Dacarbazine in a Phase III Trial," *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, DOI: 10.1200/JCO.2014.56.6018

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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