

Amgen says a study found its cancer drug more effective than rival drug

March 3 2015, by Stuart Pfeifer, Los Angeles Times

Amgen Inc., the Thousand Oaks, Calif., biotech giant, said Sunday a new study has found its cancer drug Kyprolis is far more effective in treatment of relapsed multiple myeloma than its chief rival.

The study found that [patients](#) treated with Kyprolis after a second onset of multiple myeloma lived twice as long as those treated with Velcade, a drug marketed by Johnson & Johnson and Takeda Pharmaceutical Co., Amgen said in a news release.

"It's a very big deal," said Sean E. Harper, executive vice president of research and development for Amgen. "Velcade is an enormous, blockbuster product. It's the only drug in its class. And now we've come in with something we're saying is a better drug."

Amgen acquired Kyprolis as part of a \$10 billion purchase of Onyx Pharmaceuticals Inc. in 2013. The acquisition was largely motivated by the potential that Amgen saw in Kyprolis, Harper said.

The recent study found that patients treated with Kyprolis lived 18.7 months without their conditions worsening, compared with 9.4 months for Velcade, Amgen said in the news release.

Kyprolis had sales last year of about \$330 million, about one-tenth of Velcade's nearly \$3 billion. The promising results had Amgen executives beaming Sunday.

"Demonstrating superiority over Velcade in this head-to-head trial supports our goal of ensuring continued improvement of patient outcomes and potentially establishing Kyprolis as the backbone of therapy for patients with [multiple myeloma](#)," said Pablo J. Cagnoni, president of Onyx, now an Amgen subsidiary.

An executive with Johnson & Johnson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Harper said Sunday's news helps validate the purchase of Onyx.

"Many people have been skeptical if we could demonstrate resounding superiority to Velcade," Harper said. "It's a terrific result for patients and also ... for those involved in the acquisition."

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