

Blood test replaces surgery for bowel tumor assessment

March 18 2015



Tumour determination in bowel cancer: blood test replaces surgery

A new study at the MedUni Vienna's Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC) is assessing patients with metastasised bowel cancer to determine whether it is possible to characterise tumour and better control resistance mechanisms with a blood test. The aim of this is to spare patients the stress of having tissue removed via biopsies and to make the targeted use of therapy easier.

One of the challenges of personalised medicine is the development of treatment resistance. At the Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC) Vienna at the MedUni Vienna and Vienna General Hospital, a study is

now commencing which involves patients with metastasised [bowel cancer](#) who are undergoing a new diagnostic method, namely liquid [biopsy](#) in the form of a [blood test](#). The aim of this new method is to spot a tumour's development of resistance early on and therefore adjust the treatment quickly and in a targeted manner.

Gerald Prager, from the University Department of Internal Medicine I at the MedUni Vienna and Vienna General Hospital and member of the CCC, who is in charge of the new study, explains the new study in the context of international bowel cancer month, which is this March: "On treatment, tumours often change their biological characteristics. This allows them to develop resistance to the treatment being given. To detect these changes and in order to be able to respond to them with medications, regular samples of tumour tissue - or biopsies - would be needed. These are taken, for example, as part of small operations or during CT scans, however they are associated with a risk for the patient and they are stressful."

Liquid biopsies: gentler, faster and cheaper

Liquid biopsies utilise the fact that tumours and their metastases excrete tumour cells and fragments of tumour DNA, which then circulate in the blood. Since blood samples are usually not stressful for patients, and they are also easier, faster and cheaper to carry out than tissue biopsies, the establishment of liquid biopsies as the standard method would represent a milestone in the diagnosis of progression and therefore [treatment](#) of metastasised bowel cancer.

Multi-centre study led by the CCC

The new clinical study, which bears the name CRC-RELY (Colorectal Cancer Regorefanib Liquid Biopsy), is a multi-centre project led by the

MedUni Vienna and is receiving active input from other hospitals in Austria, Italy and Switzerland. Says Prager: "With this clinical study, we are one of the first organisations worldwide to address the establishment of this diagnostic method. This once again highlights the fact that the MedUni Vienna and the CCC are taking their place at the top end of international oncology research."

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

Citation: Blood test replaces surgery for bowel tumor assessment (2015, March 18) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-03-blood-surgery-bowel-tumor.html>

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