Pathologists identify new potential target in ovarian serous cancer

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Moffitt Cancer Center researchers discovered that patients with ovarian serous cancer and an overexpression of the HER4 protein are less likely to respond to chemotherapy and have a lower rate of survival. That's according to a study Carolina Strosberg, M.D., is presenting this week at the 2016 United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology (USCAP) Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington.

Ovarian cancer accounts for about 3 percent of cancers among women, but it causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system, according to the American Cancer Society.

The human epidermal growth factor receptor (HER) is heavily involved in the beginning formation of cancer. While the prognostic impact of HER1 and HER2 has been characterized in numerous cancers, there is little data on the role and impact of HER4 in ovarian cancer.

Moffitt pathologists looked at the levels of HER4 expression in 100 ovarian serous carcinoma specimens. They found that the samples that contained the HER4 expression were linked to chemotherapy resistance and a shortened life span. This means HER4 may be a prognostic and potentially a predictive marker in ovarian serous cancer, but more studies are needed. In addition HER4 could potentially become a target for therapy.

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Anatomic Pathology and Morsani Molecular Laboratory authored the study.

Provided by H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

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