

New Omega-3 trial for secondary liver cancer surgery

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A new clinical trial from the University of Leeds is testing omega-3 capsules in patients who have bowel cancer which has spread to the liver, to see if it can stop the cancer returning after surgery.

Promising results in an earlier smaller trial showed that providing patients with 2g per day of the omega-3, called EPA, for around a month prior to surgery led to a 30 per cent increase in survival after 18 months.

Researchers at the University of Leeds are building on this past work by launching a larger clinical trial, recruiting 450 patients who are undergoing surgery for [bowel cancer](#) which has spread to the liver, known as secondary liver cancer. The first Leeds patient has just been recruited to the trial in Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

The trial is investigating whether a highly purified form of the omega-3 EPA could be an effective way to stop cancer returning after surgery, and is funded by Yorkshire Cancer Research.

Professor Mark Hull, from the University of Leeds' Institute of Biomedical and Clinical Sciences and Leeds Teaching Hospitals, is leading the trial, which involves several hospitals from around the country, including Leeds, Sheffield and Southampton.

Professor Hull said: "Secondary liver cancer is the leading cause of death for patients with [bowel](#) cancer, as the cancer spreads from the bowels to the liver, so it is vitally important that we improve our ability to stop

secondary liver spread.

"After undergoing surgery to remove secondary liver cancer, 50 to 75 per cent of patients develop a recurrence of the disease after two years, so we are investigating an intervention that may help stop the cancer returning.

"Given the minimal side-effects of omega-3 capsules and how relatively cost-effective they are compared with other more expensive anti-cancer treatments, this intervention could one day be used widely to improve survival from advanced bowel cancer."

Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, with more than 41,000 new cases diagnosed every year.

While survival has more than doubled in the last 40 years, more than half of patients with the disease experience recurrence elsewhere in the body, most commonly the [liver](#) or lungs, which is known as secondary, advanced or metastatic bowel cancer.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found mainly in fish oils and are already known to be beneficial for other health conditions including heart problems.

Dr. Kathryn Scott, Chief Executive at Yorkshire Cancer Research which is funding the trial, said: "This is a cheap and potentially powerful new way to help treat bowel [cancer](#) that, if successful, could have a huge impact.

"As well as having a potential impact on treatment, the trial will provide an opportunity for patients to take part in a pioneering study. It is well proven that [patients](#) do better in a research-rich environment."

The EPA formulation, known as icosapent ethyl and marketed as a

prescription product called Vascepa in the United States, and the placebo, have been donated free of charge by Amarin Corporation plc.

Provided by University of Leeds

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