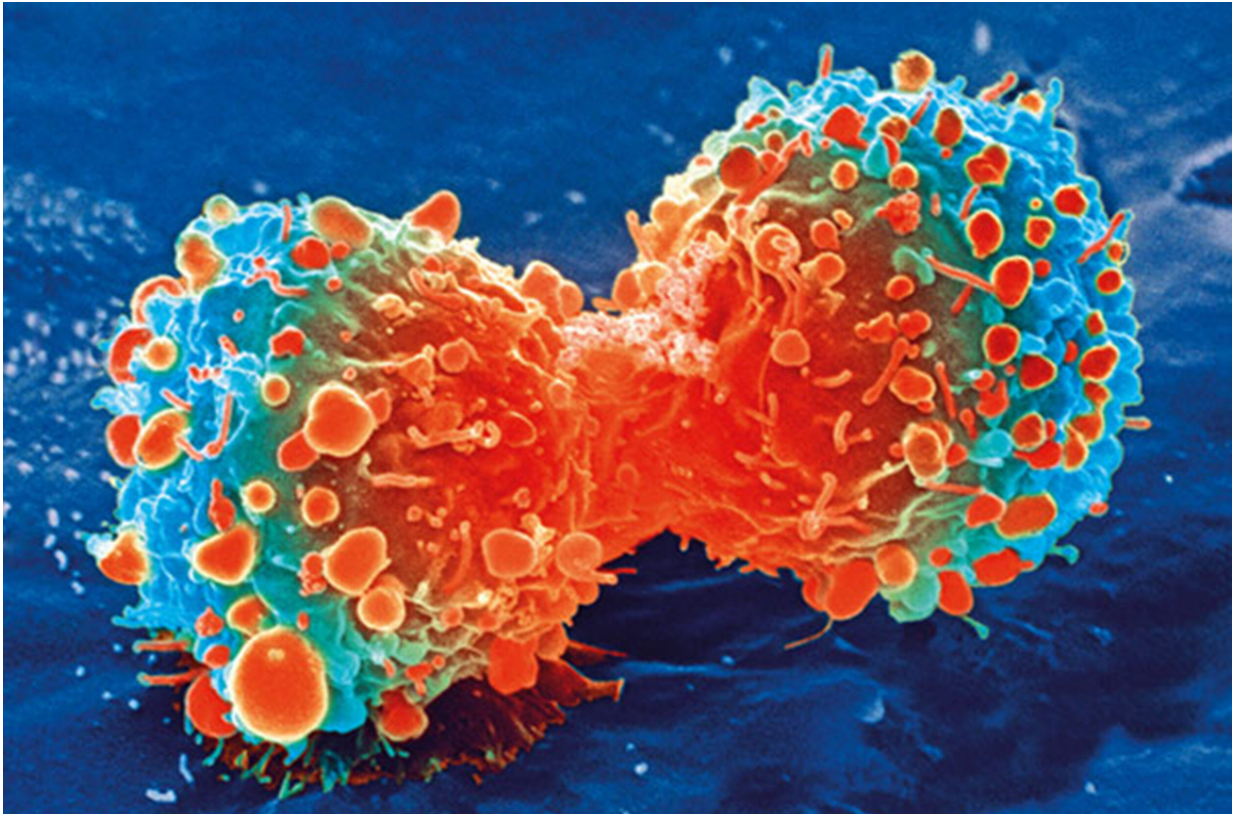


# Advanced ovarian cancer treatment approved

October 14 2019

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Cancer cell during cell division. Credit: National Institutes of Health

A targeted treatment for advanced ovarian cancer has been approved for use on the NHS in England and will be paid for by the Cancer Drugs Fund.

The [drug, rucaparib](#) (Rubraca), is designed to help maintain the effects

of chemotherapy and will be available for women with ovarian, fallopian tube or peritoneal [cancer](#) that has come back and responded to chemotherapy.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) said the decision could benefit around 1,350 people in England living with [ovarian cancer](#).

Dr. Yvette Drew, a consultant medical oncologist from Newcastle University, was a Cancer Research UK-funded scientist on the first clinical trial that tested rucaparib against ovarian cancer. She said it was "fantastic news" that the drug will be more widely available.

"Rucaparib is a very well-tolerated oral treatment giving women quality of life for longer and helps them to avoid the sometimes-debilitating side effects of chemotherapy," said Drew.

She said [trials](#) have shown that the drug significantly delays the progression of a person's cancer after they have responded to chemotherapy and delays the need for them to have subsequent chemotherapy treatments.

## **Slowing progression**

Rucaparib is a type of cancer drug called a PARP inhibitor.

It slows the progression of the disease by preventing cancer cells from repairing.

Rucaparib kills cancer cells by blocking the activity of a molecule called PARP, which helps repair damage to DNA.

[Clinical trial results](#) suggest that rucaparib extends the time before

cancer progresses to 10.8 months, compared with 5.4 months with routine care.

However, there is uncertainty over exactly how much longer people may live after taking the drug, because those taking part in the trial have not been studied for long enough.

NICE added the treatment to the Cancer Drugs Fund so eligible patients could benefit from rucaparib while long-term data is collected from an ongoing clinical trial.

## **NICE change their initial decision**

Rucaparib was initially rejected for routine use on the NHS due to uncertainties surrounding the trial evidence and the cost of the drug.

Following the [initial decision](#), NICE and the drug manufacturer negotiated a lower treatment price. NICE concluded that the drug could offer value for money at this lower price, if long-term data from the clinical trial show the drug is effective at extending patients' lives.

Meindert Boysen, director of the NICE Centre for Health Technology Evaluation, said the health watchdog was pleased with the positive response from the company that has led to rucaparib being approved for use in the Cancer Drugs Fund.

"This will allow patients to access the treatment immediately, while more evidence can be collected on its overall survival benefit."

Medicines on the Cancer Drugs Fund in England are also usually made available to patients in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Decisions over which drugs should be funded by the NHS in Scotland

are made separately by the Scottish Medicines Consortium.

Michelle Mitchell, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, added that this approval is the result of many years of hard work by Cancer Research UK scientists based at Newcastle University, who developed this drug in the 1990s in collaboration with industry partners.

"Rucaparib could bring new hope for those affected by this type of ovarian cancer, giving them a better quality of life for longer and with fewer side-effects than other types of treatment."

Mitchell said more trials are underway to discover whether this drug could also benefit people with other types of cancer and that "we await those results with interest."

**More information:** NICE (2019) Rucaparib for maintenance treatment of relapsed platinum-sensitive ovarian, fallopian tube or peritoneal cancer [ID1485]

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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