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Trial will test existing drugs against rare blood cancer

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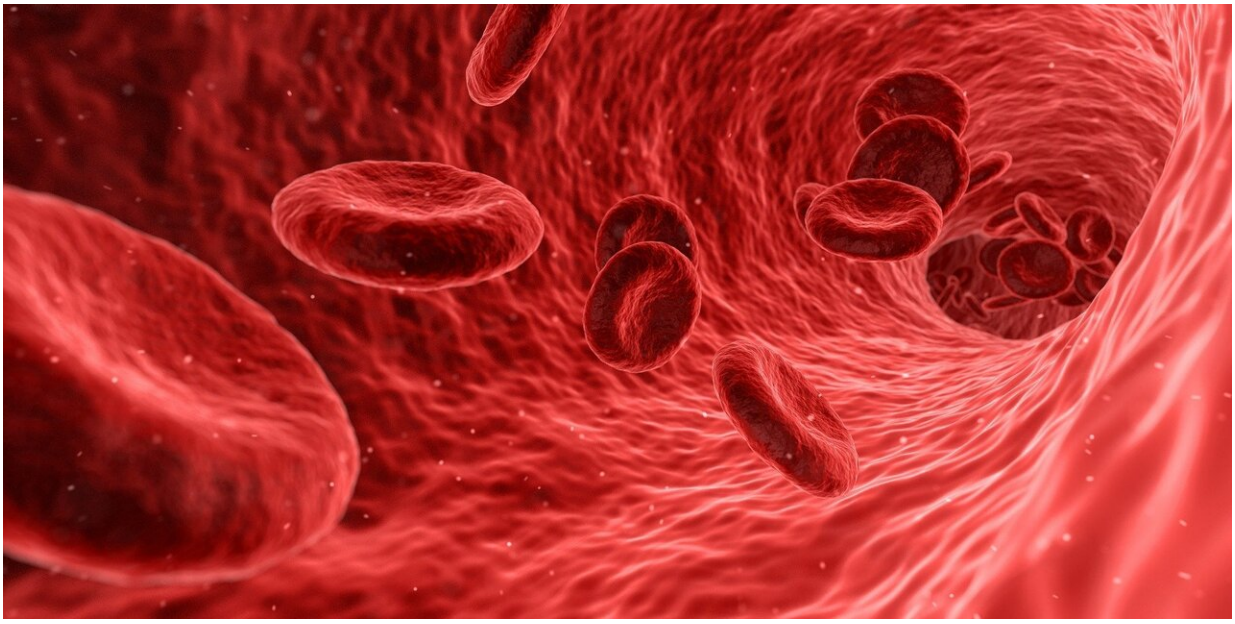

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A clinical trial designed to test existing drugs in the treatment of a rare blood cancer has been launched at the Universities of Warwick and Birmingham.

Funded by Blood Cancer UK, the trial seeks to repurpose existing drugs to improve the outlook, health and quality of life for people with Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS), a condition in which the patient does

not have enough healthy blood cells.

Called REPAIR-MDS (Repurposed drugs to improve hematological responses in Myelodysplastic Syndrome), the trial will test a number of treatments designed to improve the formation of healthy blood cells, reducing or reversing life-limiting deficiencies in red blood cells. The trial is expected to begin recruiting patients in May 2021.

Professor Janet Dunn, Head of Cancer Trials at Warwick Clinical Trials Unit at the University of Warwick, says: "It's an important trial for these patients as currently treatment options are limited. We are excited to be working closely with Birmingham and the patient groups, in particular Sophie Wintrich who is CEO from the MDS UK patient support group."

Professor Chris Bunce, in the School of Biosciences at the University of Birmingham, who led the application to Blood Cancer UK and whose research contributed to the design of the trial treatments, says: "REPAIR-MDS represents a significant turning point in UK medical research. It is the first ever UK randomized trial delivered in this neglected patient group, establishing the precedent for future trials in the UK and elsewhere."

Although rare, MDS is estimated to be more prevalent in older people, over 70 years old. There is currently no cure for the disease and treatment is usually chemotherapy-based, although in some cases a stem cell transplant may be possible.

Dr. Fatima Sulaiman, Head of Research for Blood Cancer UK added: "Blood Cancer UK are really excited to be supporting this trial. We believe that within the next generation, we'll be able to beat all types of blood cancer, and this trial will take us one step closer to doing this.

"Sadly, only 31% of people diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome

(MDS) survive 5-years, and we urgently need better treatments. Being able to repurpose existing drugs for people with MDS would mean we would be able to get new treatments to people, sooner, giving everyone the best possible chance of survival."

Provided by University of Warwick