

New phase of breast cancer drug trial provides fresh hope for patients with incurable disease

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Three-dimensional culture of human breast cancer cells, with DNA stained blue and a protein in the cell surface membrane stained green. Image created in 2014 by Tom Misteli, Ph.D., and Karen Meaburn, Ph.D. at the NIH IRP.

Millions of patients with incurable breast cancer could benefit from new Welsh-led research.

A clinical trial by Cardiff University, Velindre University NHS Trust and AstraZeneca, found a combination of drugs could help prolong the lives of patients with incurable disease.

The findings were presented at the world's biggest cancer conference in Chicago last weekend and published simultaneously in *The Lancet Oncology* journal.

The latest research builds on a 2019 trial of capivasertib, a breast cancer drug developed by AstraZeneca. Capivasertib blocks the activity of the protein AKT which contributes to resistance to [hormone therapy](#), one of the main forms of treatment for patients diagnosed with [incurable disease](#).

When the researchers combined capivasertib with hormonal treatment fulvestrant, it doubled the amount of time patients had their cancer under control (from five months to 10).

In the latest phase of the FAKTION trial, patients who had a mutation in their cancer which activated the AKT protein (identified in around half of patients on the trial) lived for around 39 months when given this combination, compared to 20 [months](#) when given the hormone plus a placebo.

"These new data are very exciting. Not only have we shown that capivasertib has the potential to give patients a very significant extension in their lifespan, but we may also be able to select out those [patients](#) who are most likely to benefit from the treatment by carrying out genetic tests on their cancer tissue," said Professor Rob Jones who co-led the trial, an expert in [medical oncology](#) at Cardiff University and assistant

medical director for [research](#) at Velindre.

"We are now very keen to see if this is confirmed in a larger phase three trial which has already completed recruitment."

More information: Sacha J Howell et al, Fulvestrant plus capivasertib versus placebo after relapse or progression on an aromatase inhibitor in metastatic, oestrogen receptor-positive, HER2-negative breast cancer (FAKTION): overall survival, updated progression-free survival, and expanded biomarker analysis from a randomised, phase 2 trial, *The Lancet Oncology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/S1470-2045\(22\)00284-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(22)00284-4)

Provided by Cardiff University

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