

Blood test spots early pancreatic cancers with 97% accuracy

April 8 2024, by Dennis Thompson



A blood test appears capable of detecting early-stage pancreatic cancers with up to 97% accuracy, a new study reports.

The test looks for eight small RNA particles and eight larger DNA markers shed by pancreatic cancers, which together create a genetic "signature" for the disease, researchers said.

Currently, it's tough to catch pancreatic cancer before it has reached an [advanced stage](#). The organ is located deep in the abdomen, and the cancer has symptoms that can be mistakenly attributed to other diseases.

"Pancreatic cancer is one of the most fatal malignancies, in large part because the majority of patients are diagnosed only after the cancer has already metastasized," senior researcher [Ajay Goel](#), chair of molecular diagnostics and experimental therapeutics at City of Hope Cancer Center said in a news release.

The five-year survival rate for patients diagnosed with early-stage pancreatic cancer is 44%, but that drops to 3% if the cancer is caught after it has spread elsewhere in the body, researchers noted.

An earlier trial of this [blood test](#) in 95 patients from the U.S. and Japan found a detection rate of 98%.

This latest trial involved 523 people with pancreatic cancer and 461 healthy people from Japan, the U.S., South Korea and China.

The blood test detected:

- 93% of pancreatic cancers among the U.S. participants.
- 91% of pancreatic cancers among the South Koreans.
- 88% of pancreatic cancers in the Chinese group.

When researchers combined the blood test with a test for an already-established pancreatic cancer marker called CA 19-9, the accuracy increased to 97% of stage 1 and 2 cancers among the U.S. participants.

Stage 1 [pancreatic cancers](#) are confined to the organ, while stage 2 have spread to nearby lymph nodes but not elsewhere.

"Our approach offers a liquid biopsy test superior to CA19-9 measurement alone for early-stage disease," Goel said.

However, researchers said more research is needed to validate the test before it can be deployed to the general population.

Researchers were scheduled to present the trial results Monday at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in San Diego. Findings presented at medical meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The American Cancer Society has more on [pancreatic cancer](#).

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