

# New drug substantially extends survival in pancreatic cancer

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A new form of chemotherapy that destroys new blood vessels that grow around tumors has produced excellent results in a phase II trial of patients with inoperable pancreatic cancer, researchers report at the 33rd Congress of the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) in Stockholm.

European investigators led by Prof. Matthias Löhr from the Karolinska Institute evaluated the efficacy and safety of three different doses of cationic lipid complexed paclitaxel (EndoTAG-1) administered twice weekly, in combination with weekly infusions of gemcitabine, compared to gemcitabine alone, in 200 patients with pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

"EndoTAG consists of charged particles that bind preferentially to the fast-growing endothelial cells in new blood vessels being formed by tumors," Prof. Löhr explained. "The drug, paclitaxel, is then released and thus directly reaches an important target in tumors, i.e. the vessels. Paclitaxel itself is not very efficient in pancreatic cancer."

After following patients for a year, the researchers found that treatment with such combination led to a substantially extended median survival time compared to standard therapy. Patients given gemcitabine alone survived on average 7.2 months, compared to up to 13.6 months for patients who received repeated doses of the combination (EndoTAG plus gemcitabine).

"These results are the best I have ever seen in palliative treatment in pancreatic cancer," Prof. Löhr said. "The results are really excellent and a phase III study is in the making."

Source: European Society for Medical Oncology

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