

Cuba releases world's first lung cancer vaccine

8 September 2011, by Lisa Zyga

(Medical Xpress) -- As the most common and deadliest form of cancer, lung cancer kills 1.4 million people per year worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. While current treatments may improve the survival rate when the cancer is caught in its early stages, the five-year survival rate for late-stage lung cancer can be less than 1%. Now some patients with advanced lung cancer may have another tool to combat the disease, as Cuban medical authorities announced on Tuesday that they will begin selling the world's first therapeutic vaccine against lung cancer.

The vaccine, called CimaVax-EGF, is intended for patients with lung cancer in stages three and four who have shown no positive response to other kinds of treatment, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Although the vaccine doesn't cure the disease, it can minimize the cancer's growth due to its antibodies that combat the proteins that allow uncontrolled cell growth.

"The drug could turn the cancer into a manageable, chronic disease by generating antibodies against the proteins which triggered the uncontrolled cell proliferation," said Gisela Gonzalez at the Center of Molecular Immunology (CIM) in Havana, who is lead researcher of the project. "It is not possible to prevent the disease, but this vaccine improves significantly the status of the critically ill patients."

The researchers have performed clinical studies and trials in more than 1,000 lung cancer patients in Cuba, where the vaccine is now distributed free of charge. Due in part to Cuba's large smoking population, lung cancer is the leading cause of death in 12 of the country's 15 provinces.

The [lung cancer vaccine](#) is the result of 25 years of research by CIM scientists into diseases related to tobacco smoking. In the future, the researchers plan to apply the same principles of the CimaVAX-EGF to treat other cancerous tumors, such as

those in prostate, uterus, and breast cancers.

More information: via: [PopSci](#) and [Xinhua](#)

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APA citation: Cuba releases world's first lung cancer vaccine (2011, September 8) retrieved 18 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-09-cuba-world-lung-cancer-vaccine.html>

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