

New treatment combination safe for pancreatic cancer patients

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Treating pancreatic cancer with a combination of chemotherapy, biotherapy and radiotherapy prior to surgery is safe and may be beneficial for patients, according to a University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) study presented at the 44th annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Chicago.

In a preliminary study, physicians from the Pancreatic Cancer Center of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Cancer Centers examined the safety of combining gemcitabine with bevacizumab and radiotherapy in patients with operable pancreatic cancer. In the study, 14 patients with potentially operable tumors completed the treatment regimen. Following treatment, 10 of the patients were considered eligible for surgery. The incidence of serious adverse events following surgery was not increased in these patients, and several demonstrated significant shrinkage of their tumors before surgery.

“The results from the first phase of this two-phase trial are encouraging,” said A. James Moser, M.D., lead author of the study, co-director of the Pancreatic Cancer Center and assistant professor of surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. “Patients who receive surgery for pancreatic cancer tend to have better outcomes than those who don’t, and this treatment allows us to reduce the tumor size prior to surgery.”

Given the evidence of tumor-shrinkage from the initial treatment, Dr. Moser and his colleagues are enrolling patients for the second stage of

the study to further evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment.

Each year, about 33,000 individuals in the U.S. are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It is difficult to diagnose early because symptoms are both rare and varied, and often don't occur until the disease has progressed. Because of this, patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer typically have a poor prognosis, underscoring the importance of new treatment options.

Source: University of Pittsburgh

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