

Scientists explore promising new option for first line of attack in lymphoma

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Follicular lymphoma is a type of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma– a blood cancer - that usually develops slowly. The majority of patients are diagnosed when their disease is at an advanced stage.

Recent improvements in treatment have included the use of antibodies to specifically target the [tumour cells](#) and to stimulate the patient's own immune system to attack their tumour. The use of such antibodies has improved treatment response, but unfortunately most patients still relapse.

Radioimmunotherapy – where a [radioactive substance](#) is attached to the antibody – has been shown to be successful in treating patients who had previously relapsed.

Now a team involving researchers from The University of Manchester – part of the Manchester Cancer Research Centre - has investigated the use of radioimmunotherapy treatment in newly diagnosed patients.

The study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, looked at the effect of delivering the treatment in two fractions or doses – this approach is thought to improve the penetration of the drug within larger tumours and also helps reduce the side effects associated with a full dose treatment.

Professor Tim Illidge, who led the research, said: "This was the first study to look at giving two fractions of radioimmunotherapy as an initial

treatment in [follicular lymphoma](#). We wanted to assess its safety and effectiveness in a group of high-risk patients who conventionally have done less well."

The researchers found that that their treatment plan was feasible and safe, with very few side effects.

"We saw a high overall response rate, of 94.4%, and 50 of the 72 (69.4%) patients treated in the study achieved complete response – meaning their symptoms disappeared. These results are encouraging, but we need further studies in larger numbers of patients to fully compare this treatment to the standard treatment of 6-8 cycles of chemotherapy," added Professor Illidge.

Provided by University of Manchester

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