Printed August 27, 2014 from http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/penile-cancer/latest-research

Penile Cancer - Latest Research [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 07/2013

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about the scientific research being done now to learn more about this type of cancer and how to treat it. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Doctors are working to learn more about penile cancer, ways to prevent it, how to best treat it, and how to provide the best care to men diagnosed with this disease. The following areas of research may include new options for patients through clinical trials. Always talk with your doctor about the diagnostic and treatment options best for you.

Immunotherapy. Immunotherapy (also called biologic therapy) is designed to boost the body's natural defenses to fight the cancer. It uses materials made either by the body or in a laboratory to improve, target, or restore immune system function. Imiquimod (Aldara) is an immunotherapy cream that is being researched for use on the skin of the penis for early-stage cancer. Learn more about immunotherapy [3].

Targeted therapy. Targeted therapy is a treatment that targets the cancer?s specific genes, proteins, or the tissue environment that contributes to cancer growth and survival. This type of treatment blocks the growth and spread of cancer cells while limiting the damage to normal cells.

Recent studies show that not all tumors have the same targets. To find the most effective treatment, your doctor may run tests to identify the genes, proteins, and other factors in your tumor. As a result, doctors can better match each patient with the most effective treatment whenever possible. In addition, many research studies are taking place now to find out more about specific molecular targets and new treatments directed at them. Learn more about targeted treatments [4].

Clinical trials are being done using drugs that block the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), a protein that helps cancer cells grow and multiply. Researchers have found that drugs that block EGFR may be effective for stopping or slowing the growth of penile cancer.

Radiation therapy. Researchers are working to find the best way to use radiation therapy for penile cancer. This could include a combination of therapies, including radiation therapy and chemotherapy, in an effort to avoid surgery to remove the penis. Improved techniques use CT scans to plan treatment, which may help find the dose that best treats the cancer while causing

fewer side effects.

Radiosensitizers. In addition, researchers are looking at the use of radiosensitizers in the treatment of penile cancer. Radiosensitizers are drugs that make tumor cells more sensitive to radiation therapy, which makes radiation therapy more effective.

Combination therapy. Researchers are studying whether the combination of chemotherapy and radiation therapy better reduces the risk of recurrence and/or increases survival than standard treatments.

Minimally invasive surgery. Minimally invasive surgery uses small incisions and a camera placed under the skin to perform a lymph node dissection to find out if the cancer has spread. Researchers are also studying endoscopic (use of a thin, lighted flexible tube) and robotically-assisted surgery to diagnose and remove penile cancer that may have spread to regional lymph nodes.

Supportive care. Clinical trials are underway to find better ways of reducing symptoms and side effects of current penile cancer treatments in order to improve patients? comfort and quality of life.

Looking for More about the Latest Research?

If you would like additional information about the latest areas of research regarding penile cancer, explore this related item that takes you outside of this guide:

- To find clinical trials specific to your diagnosis, talk with your doctor or search online clinical trial databases now [5].

The next section addresses how to cope with the symptoms of the disease or the side effects of its treatment. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Coping with Side Effects, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/penile-cancer/latest-research
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/24726
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