Adding Bevacizumab to Chemotherapy Keeps Ovarian Cancer From Worsening Longer Than Chemotherapy Alone

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According to a recent study, giving bevacizumab (Avastin) along with standard chemotherapy doubled the time it took for platinum-resistant ovarian, fallopian tube, and primary peritoneal cancers to worsen. These are all cancers of a woman's reproductive system that are treated similarly. Platinum-based chemotherapy is often the first treatment for these cancers and includes the drugs cisplatin (Platinol), carboplatin (Paraplat, Paraplatin), and oxaliplatin (Eloxatin). When platinum-based drugs stop working to control the cancer's growth, it is called platinum-resistant cancer.

This study included 361 patients who had ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer that had worsened within six months of their last dose of platinum-based chemotherapy. During the study, patients received either bevacizumab plus chemotherapy with paclitaxel (Taxol), topotecan (Hycamtin), or liposomal pegylated doxorubicin (multiple brand names), or they received only chemotherapy.

After a little over a year, researchers found that 75% (135 out of 179 patients) of the patients who received bevacizumab plus chemotherapy had a recurrence (cancer that comes back after treatment), compared with 91% (166 out of 182 patients) who received chemotherapy alone. In addition, researchers found that the time it took for the cancer to worsen was nearly seven months for patients who received bevacizumab and chemotherapy, compared with a little more than three months for those who received chemotherapy alone.

In this study, the patients receiving bevacizumab plus chemotherapy had more moderate side effects than those who received chemotherapy alone. These side effects included high blood pressure and gastrointestinal perforations (tears in the lining of the bowel).

What this means for patients

?Bevacizumab offers a new treatment option for the 20% of women who have primary platinum-resistant ovarian cancer, as well as those whose disease later becomes platinum-resistant,? said lead study author Eric Pujade-Lauraine, MD, PhD, Professor, UniversitÃ© de Paris Descartes, France and Head of the Group d'Investigateurs Nationaux pour l'Etude des Cancers Ovariens (GINECO), a clinical trials cooperative group based in France. ?For the first time in platinum-resistant ovarian cancer, we have been able to use a combination therapy to significantly improve the time it takes for the disease to worsen.?

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What type and stage of cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the next step if the current treatment stops working?
- What are the side effects of treatment? How can they be managed?

For More Information

Guide to Ovarian Cancer [1]

Guide to Fallopian Tube Cancer [2]

When the First Treatment Doesn't Work [3]

Managing Side Effects [4]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Ovarian+Cancer
[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Fallopian+Tube+Cancer
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/When+the+First+Treatment+Doesn%27t+Work
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects