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Afatinib Keeps Advanced Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer With EGFR Mutations From Worsening Longer Than Chemotherapy [1]

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In a recent international study, researchers found that the targeted therapy drug afatinib kept advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) with mutations (changes) to the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) from worsening longer than the standard treatment. Targeted therapy is a treatment that targets a cancer's specific genes, proteins, or the tissue environment that contributes to cancer growth and survival. Specifically, afatinib targets EGFR. In a healthy cell, EGFR allows cells to grow and divide. When there are too many receptors caused by a mutation, as happens in cancer, the cancer cells continue to grow and divide uncontrollably.

The 345 patients who participated in this study had NSCLC with EGFR mutations and received either afatinib or the standard chemotherapy, a combination of pemetrexed (Alimta) and cisplatin (Platinol) given intravenously (IV; into a vein). Overall, researchers found that it took about four months longer for the cancer to worsen for patients taking afatinib than for patients receiving chemotherapy. For a subgroup of patients with two of the most common types of EGFR mutations (called deletion 19 and L858R), the time it took for the cancer to worsen for those taking afatinib was almost seven months longer than for those receiving chemotherapy. Afatinib also slowed the development of common lung cancer-related symptoms, including cough and shortness of breath.

What this means for patients

By more broadly and effectively blocking how these cancers grow, afatinib appears to be more effective than other therapies that target EGFR, said lead author James Chih-Hsin Yang, MD, PhD, a Professor at the National Taiwan University. This new treatment could not only help patients live longer without the cancer worsening, but because it's given orally, it may also require fewer visits to the doctors' office than standard chemotherapy - another important quality of life advantage.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What type of lung cancer do I have?
- What is the stage? What does this mean?
- Was my tumor tested for EGFR mutations? How will the results affect treatment?
- What are my treatment options?
- What treatment do you recommend? Why?
- What are the possible side effects? How can they be managed?

For More Information

[Guide to Lung Cancer](#) [2]

[EGFR Testing for Advanced NSCLC](#) [3]

[Understanding Targeted Treatments](#) [4]

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[Managing Side Effects](#) [6]

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[2] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Lung+Cancer>

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