

Cetuximab With Chemotherapy Helps Patients With Advanced Lung Cancer Live Longer

The study: In a study of 1,125 patients from 30 countries, researchers looked at adding cetuximab (Erbix) to chemotherapy with cisplatin (Platinol) and vinorelbine (Navelbine) for patients newly diagnosed with advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Cetuximab is a targeted therapy that blocks the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), a protein that helps lung cancer cells grow and multiply. The current standard treatment for these patients is platinum-based chemotherapy, such as cisplatin or carboplatin (Paraplatin), combined with newer types of chemotherapy, such as vinorelbine, gemcitabine (Gemzar), paclitaxel (Taxol), or docetaxel (Taxotere).

In this study, 557 patients received chemotherapy and cetuximab, and 568 patients received only chemotherapy. Of these patients, nearly all had stage IV lung cancer, which means that cancer had spread to other parts of the body.

The results: Patients who received cetuximab plus chemotherapy lived slightly longer than 11 months, compared with approximately 10 months for patients who received chemotherapy alone. Treatment with chemotherapy and cetuximab slowed tumor growth and/or caused tumor shrinkage for 36% of patients, compared with 29% of patients who received only chemotherapy. Cetuximab helped patients with different subtypes of NSCLC, including adenocarcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Like other drugs that target EGFR, the most common side effect was an acne-like rash that was treatable with medication.

What this means for patients

Patients with advanced NSCLC have limited treatment options, and life expectancy is short, so the survival increase shown in this study is an important step for these patients, said lead author Robert Pirker, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine at Medical University of Vienna, Austria. These results clearly establish cetuximab in combination with chemotherapy as a new standard for the initial treatment of advanced NSCLC. Cetuximab is injected into the vein and is currently approved to treat colorectal and head and neck cancers.

What to ask your doctor

- What stage lung cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What are the possible side effects of these treatments?

For more information

[Cancer.Net Guide to Lung Cancer](#) [1]

[Cancer.Net Feature: Understanding Targeted Treatments](#) [2]

[Cancer.Net: Skin Reactions to Targeted Therapies](#) [3]

Links:

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

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Targeted+Treatments>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Skin+Reactions+to+Targeted+Therapies>