

## Chemotherapy Helps Patients With Early-Stage Pancreatic Cancer Live Longer

**The study:** In a large clinical trial of adjuvant therapy (treatment after surgery) for early-stage pancreatic cancer, researchers evaluated whether treatment with gemcitabine (Gemzar) helped patients live longer. Gemcitabine is the standard treatment for advanced pancreatic cancer that cannot be surgically removed. In this study (called CONKO-001), 368 patients either received treatment with gemcitabine after complete surgical removal of the tumor and no evidence of cancer remaining after surgery, or received no additional treatment after surgery (which is the standard treatment). Previous results from this study presented at the 2005 ASCO Annual Meeting showed that treatment with gemcitabine increases the amount of time that a patient is free of cancer. This study was continued to find out if treatment with gemcitabine also increases survival.

**The results:** Adjuvant treatment with gemcitabine increases survival for patients with early-stage pancreatic cancer. After three years, 37% of patients who received gemcitabine were alive, compared with 20% of those who did not, and cancer did not return for 24% patients who received gemcitabine, compared with 8% of patients who did not receive gemcitabine. After five years, 21% of patients who received gemcitabine were alive, compared with 9% of those who did not, and cancer did not return for 17% of patients who received gemcitabine, compared with 6% of patients who did not receive gemcitabine. A small percentage of patients (between 1% and 2%) who received gemcitabine had a slight decrease in white blood cell counts and platelets (parts of the blood that help with clotting).

### What this means for patients

?The goal of chemotherapy after surgery is to improve the cure rate, and we have shown that this treatment more than doubles the overall survival five years after treatment,? said Hanno Riess, MD, PhD, Professor at CharitÄ© University Medical School in Berlin, Germany and author of the CONKO study group. ?Based on earlier results of this study, this treatment is already widely used in both Europe and the United States.? Patients with early-stage pancreatic cancer that can be removed with surgery should talk with their doctor about chemotherapy.

### What to ask your doctor

- What is the stage of my cancer? What does this mean?
- Can surgery be used to treat the cancer?
- What are my other treatment options?
- What are the possible side effects of this treatment?

### For more information

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

#### Links:

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