Drug Improves Survival for Patients With Advanced Melanoma

Researchers found that patients with advanced melanoma who received the drug ipilimumab, either with or without a specialized vaccine that stimulates the immune system, lived almost four months longer than patients who did not receive this drug. Ipilimumab is a type of drug called a monoclonal antibody that uses the body's immune system to help fight cancer. In this study, patients received ipilimumab, a specialized vaccine, or a combination of ipilimumab and the vaccine. All of the patients in the study had received previous treatment for melanoma.

What this means for patients

?Over the last 30 years, studies haven't shown an increase in survival for patients with advanced melanoma. It's an extremely difficult disease to treat,? said lead researcher Steven O'Day, MD, Chief of Research and Director of the Melanoma Program at The Angeles Clinic and Research Institute in Los Angeles, and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine. ?These results are an important advance for patients with advanced melanoma.?

What to Ask Your Doctor

- What stage of melanoma do I have?
- What is my prognosis (chance of recovery)?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

Guide to Melanoma [1]

ASCO Answers Fact Sheet: Melanoma [2]

Understanding Targeted Treatments [3]

Understanding Cancer Vaccines [4]

Understanding Immunotherapy [5]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Melanoma
[2] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/vignette/ASCO_Answers_Melanoma.pdf
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Targeted+Treatments
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Cancer+Vaccines
[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Immunotherapy