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[Next Step in Treating Melanoma: Combinations of Targeted Therapy](#) [1]

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An early study of melanoma showed that combining two types of targeted therapies was safe and slows or stops melanoma growth. Targeted therapy is a treatment that targets a cancer's specific genes, proteins, or the tissue environment that contributes to cancer growth and survival. One of the targeted therapies used in this study, called GSK212, targets mutations (changes) to the gene called *MEK*. The other, called GSK436, targets mutations to the gene called *BRAF*. Both of these genes contribute to melanoma growth, and both treatments have been shown to help treat melanoma when used alone. In this ongoing study, researchers aim to find out if combining the drugs is safe and more effective for patients with advanced melanoma.

In the first part of this three-part study, 45 patients received low doses of the drug combination to make sure the combination of the drugs was safe. In the second part of the study, the patients received the drugs in doses that slowly increased. So far, the tumors have stopped growing, grown more slowly, or shrunk in 81% of patients. Researchers also found that the drugs do not cause more side effects when used together. In fact, the patients receiving the drug combination have had fewer rashes and non-melanoma skin cancers than patients who received the drugs separately.

The third part of the study will include 50 patients with stage IV melanoma (melanoma that has spread to other parts of the body) who have not had any chemotherapy. They will receive one of three possible treatments: the highest possible dose of both of the targeted therapies, the highest possible dose of the drug that targets *BRAF* and a slightly lower dose of the drug that

targets *MEK*, or the highest dose of the drug that targets *BRAF* only.

What this means for patients

“With new therapies that target mutations in melanoma, we can now make sure patients receive the treatment that works best for them,” said lead author Jeffrey Infante, MD, Director of Drug Development at the Sarah Cannon Research Institute in Nashville, Tennessee. “We hope that the benefits of the combination will last longer than a single drug.” This study is ongoing and the final results will not be ready until after the study is completed. If you would like more information about targeted therapy and treatment options for melanoma, including clinical trials, considering asking your doctor the questions listed below.

Questions to ask your doctor

- What stage of melanoma do I have?
- What are my treatment options? Do they include targeted therapy?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

[Guide to Melanoma](#) [2]

[Understanding Targeted Treatments](#) [3]

[Clinical Trials](#) [4]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/next-step-treating-melanoma-combinations-targeted-therapy>

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

[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/Clinical+Trials>