

## Pemetrexed May be Equivalent to Docetaxel in Treating Patients with Recurrent Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer

In a study of 571 patients with NSCLC, researchers compared the chemotherapy drugs docetaxel (Taxotere) and pemetrexed (Alimta). Researchers found that pemetrexed is as effective as docetaxel in treating patients with NSCLC that has recurred following treatment.

While cancer growth remained stable for the same period of time in 43% of all patients in the study, 9.1% of patients taking pemetrexed, compared with 8.8% of patients taking docetaxel, experienced either partial or complete remission. Partial remission is when a tumor has been reduced to less than half of its original size and when more treatment may lead to complete remission. Complete remission is when the disease is under control and the patient has no signs or symptoms of the disease.

The average length of survival for patients taking pemetrexed was 8.3 months versus 7.9 months for those taking docetaxel.

Patients taking pemetrexed were also much less likely to experience severe chemotherapy-related side effects, such as fever, infections, hair loss, and peripheral neuropathy, which is numbness of the extremities, such as the hands and feet. They were also less likely to be hospitalized for these side effects or need granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF).

G-CSF is a therapy that treats bone marrow deficiency (that can occur following chemotherapy) by stimulating the production of healthy white blood cells.

Currently, pemetrexed is available in clinical trials as well as through a special program for patients with malignant mesothelioma, a rare group of cancers that line the chest cavity, abdominal cavity, and the cavity around the heart.

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