

Cancer Advances: Study Finds Extended Use of Paclitaxel Can Slow the Spread of Advanced Ovarian Cancer

From the July 1, 2013 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* [Read the Study](#) [1] While treating advanced ovarian cancer with combination chemotherapy has been shown to treat the cancer for a period of time, 75% of women living with the disease eventually are faced with the cancer's return. However, a new study shows that continuing to receive the common chemotherapy drug paclitaxel (Taxol) following initial combination chemotherapy can help to slow the cancer's spread. A team of researchers, led by Maurie Markman, MD, Chairman of the Department of Hematology/Medical Oncology at the Cleveland Clinic, conducted a study of patients with advanced ovarian cancer whose cancer was under control and who showed no signs or symptoms of disease following combination chemotherapy that included cisplatin (Platinol) or carboplatin (Paraplatin), plus paclitaxel. Following their initial treatment with combination chemotherapy, the patients participating in the study received paclitaxel once a month for three or 12 months. At a mid-way examination of the 222 patients participating in the trial, researchers found that 34 patients on the three-month treatment showed signs of the disease's return, compared with only 20 patients on the 12-month treatment. On average, it took 21 months for a patient on the three-month treatment to experience these symptoms, compared with 28 months for a patient on the 12-month treatment. Based on these results, an independent review board - which ensures the safety of patients enrolled in clinical trials - decided to close the trial early because the results clearly favored the continuation of paclitaxel following initial combination chemotherapy as a way to slow the spread of advanced ovarian cancer. While most of the side effects associated with both the three- and 12-month treatments were similar, the frequency of peripheral neuropathy - a condition that can cause pain, tingling, or numbness in the extremities, such as the hands and the feet - was much higher among the women on the 12-month paclitaxel treatment. However, researchers noted that since the patients had already taken a regimen that included paclitaxel, they understood the potential side effects. **What Does This Mean for Patients?** This study shows that paclitaxel may help slow the spread of advanced ovarian cancer in some patients whose cancer has responded well to initial chemotherapy. Patients should discuss the potential benefits of such a treatment with their physician.

Links:

[1] <http://www.jco.org/cgi/content/abstract/21/13/2460>