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Treatment with Pazopanib After Successful Chemotherapy Delays the Recurrence of Advanced Ovarian Cancer [1]

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Women with advanced ovarian cancer or a related gynecologic cancer who receive treatment with the targeted therapy pazopanib (Votrient) following successful chemotherapy lived longer without their disease coming back than those receiving a placebo (an inactive treatment, often called a ?sugar pill?), according to the results of a recent clinical trial. Pazopanib is medication taken by mouth that focuses on stopping angiogenesis, which is the process of making new blood vessels. Because a tumor needs the nutrients delivered by blood vessels to grow and spread, the goal of anti-angiogenesis therapy is to starve the tumor.

Despite successful initial treatment with surgery and chemotherapy, about 70% of women with advanced ovarian cancer experience a recurrence (when the cancer comes back after the initial treatment), and about half of these occur within the first year. Advanced ovarian cancer is cancer that has spread into the peritoneum (the membrane that lines the inside of the abdomen) or to distant organs. Because doctors are currently unable to predict which patients will experience a recurrence, maintenance therapy (ongoing treatment to help lower the risk of recurrence after the cancer has disappeared following initial therapy) is a promising area of research.

As part of this study, 940 women with stage III or stage IV ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer (a rare cancer that begins in the peritoneum) received either pazopanib or a placebo every day for 24 months. Before participating in this study, all of the women had surgery and five or more rounds of chemotherapy that successfully prevented the disease from getting worse.

Researchers found that for women who received maintenance therapy with pazopanib, it took an average of 18 months for the disease to worsen compared with 12 months for women who did not receive the maintenance therapy.

What this means for patients

?Our findings show that we finally have a drug that can maintain control over ovarian cancer

growth achieved through initial treatments,? said lead author Andreas du Bois, MD, Professor of Gynecologic Oncology at Kliniken Essen Mitte in Essen, Germany. ?If pazopanib is approved for ovarian cancer, many patients will experience longer disease-free and chemotherapy-free periods.?

Pazopanib is currently approved to treat kidney cancer and soft tissue sarcoma. It is not approved in the United States for use as a maintenance therapy for ovarian cancer at this time. As a result, it may only available as part of a clinical trial. If you are interested in participating in a clinical trial, talk with your doctor for more information.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What stage of cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- What is my prognosis (chance of recovery)?
- What are my treatment options?
- What is the chance that the cancer will come back after treatment?
- If the cancer does come back, what are the next steps?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

Guide to Ovarian Cancer [2]

Guide to Fallopian Tube Cancer [3]

Angiogenesis and Angiogenesis Inhibitors to Treat Cancer [4]

Understanding Maintenance Therapy [5]

ASCO Expert Corner: Placebos in Cancer Clinical Trials [6]

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