Printed December 12, 2013 from http://www.cancer.net/cancer-news-and-meetings/asco-annual-meetings/research-summaries/investigational-drug-nivolumab-shrinks-advanced-melanoma-tumors

An Investigational Drug, Nivolumab, Shrinks Advanced Melanoma Tumors

Long-term follow-up of patients participating in an early study for advanced melanoma showed that nivolumab was able to shrink tumors and continue working for a longer time than other approved melanoma treatments. Nivolumab is a type of immunotherapy, a treatment designed to boost the body?s natural defenses to fight the cancer. Specifically, nivolumab targets PD-1, which is found on the surface of tumor cells and prevents the immune system from destroying the cancer. Nivolumab stops PD-1 from working so the immune system can get rid of the cancer.

In this study, 107 patients with advanced melanoma that had worsened on previous treatments received one of five different doses of nivolumab. Researchers found that 31% (33 out of 107 patients) had their tumors shrink by at least a third, regardless of the dose they received. Researchers estimate that about 43% of patients will be alive after two years of treatment.

What this means for patients

?I think nivolumab is a real breakthrough drug for patients with metastatic melanoma, and probably for other diseases, too,? said lead author Mario Sznol, MD, Professor of Medical Oncology at the Yale Cancer Center in New Haven, Connecticut. Because this study was an early-stage clinical trial and not from a large, randomized clinical trial, the results will need to be confirmed in further studies. Nivolumab is still being studied and this drug is only available through clinical trials. 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 melanoma do I have? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

Guide to Melanoma [1]

Understanding Immunotherapy [2]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/node/19251
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24726