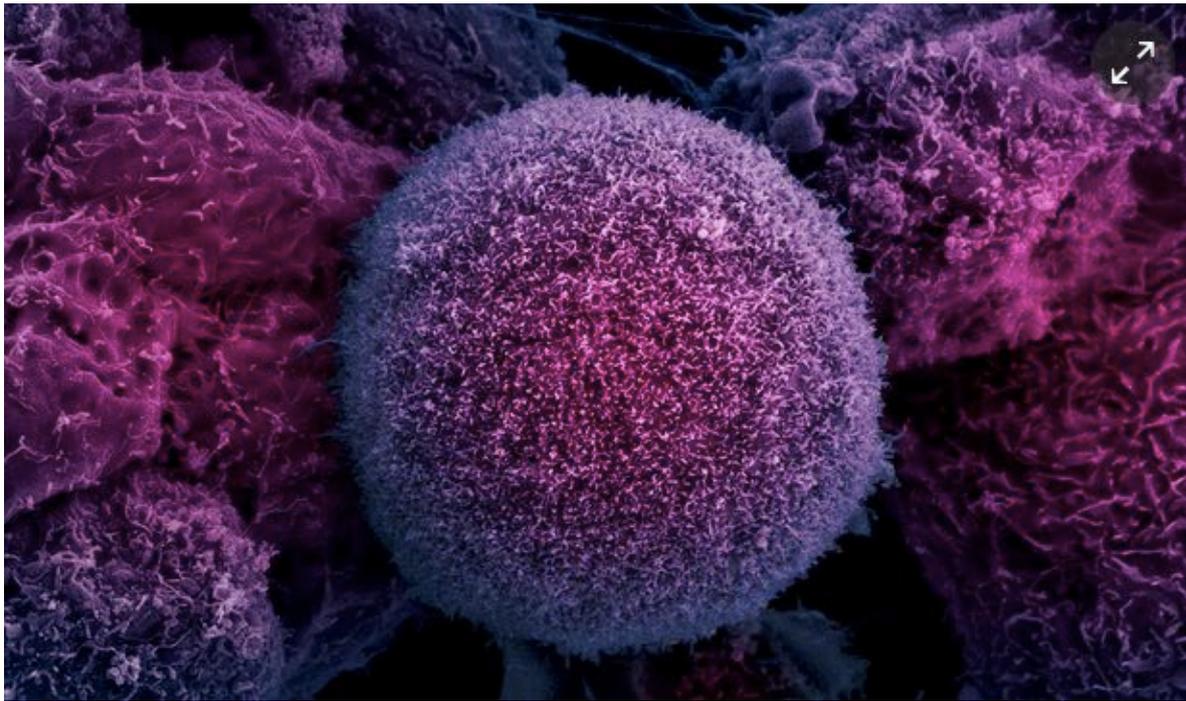


Prostate cancer trial stuns researchers: 'It's a once in a career feeling'

Study with 'powerful results' finds that combining two existing therapies could extend the life of men with advanced, high-risk prostate cancer by 37%



More than 27,000 men in the US and 11,000 men in the UK die of prostate cancer each year. Photograph: Electron Microscopy Unit, Cancer/Getty Images/Visuals Unlimited

Jessica Glenza in Chicago, Illinois

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Combining two existing prostate cancer therapies could extend the life of men with advanced, high-risk prostate cancer by 37%, according to a study presented at the world's largest cancer conference. The new findings could change how doctors first approach treatment of prostate cancer.

"These are the most powerful results I've seen from a prostate cancer trial," said Nicholas James, the lead author of the abstract presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology. "It's a once in a career feeling. This is one of the biggest reductions

in death I've seen in any clinical trial for adult cancers.”

Researchers combined standard hormone therapy with a drug called abiraterone , which is typically used only for cancer patients whose disease has stopped responding to standard hormone therapy. The research was conducted as part of the Stampede trial, an ongoing randomized trial conducted in the UK and Switzerland.

“Abiraterone not only prolonged life, but also lowered the chance of relapse by 70% and reduced the chance of serious bone complications by 50%,” James said. “Based on the magnitude of clinical benefit, we believe the upfront care for patients newly diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer should change.”

The study looked at a group of 2,000 men. Patients who received both abiraterone and normal hormone therapy were significantly less likely to die, compared to patients who received only hormone therapy.

Comparatively, 83% of men assigned abiraterone therapy survived versus 76% of men on standard hormone therapy. Researchers also found that patients who received both medications had slightly stronger side effects, especially cardiovascular and liver problems.

One patient who participated in the trial, Alfred Samuels, 59, was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in January 2012. “It felt like my world fell apart overnight,” Samuels said. “The doctors explained that surgery wasn’t an option for me because the cancer had spread beyond my prostate.”

“As part of the trial, I started taking abiraterone four times a day and had a hormone injection every eight weeks,” he said. “During the first six months, tests showed that the treatment was working. I’m still on the trial, which I find reassuring and, fortunately, my cancer is being managed well.”

More than 27,000 men in the US and 11,000 men in the UK die of prostate cancer each year, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prostate Cancer UK. In the US, aside from skin cancer, it is the [most common](#) cancer in men.

“The potential benefits of giving some men abiraterone alongside hormone therapy are clearly impressive and we will be working with all relevant bodies to make sure this treatment becomes an option available for these men via [the NHS](#),” said Dr Iain Frame, director of research at Prostate Cancer UK.