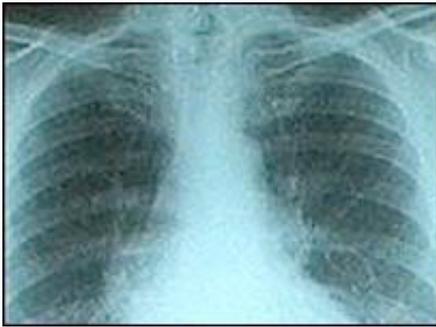


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Drugs boost lung cancer survival



A cocktail of drugs could boost the survival rate of some lung cancer patients by a third, research suggests.

The treatment combines two existing drugs, cisplatin and etoposide, with radiotherapy and a drug, Taxotere, to prevent the cancer re-occurring.

When given to 83 US patients, half survived for two years and 29% for more than five years.

The study, led by the University of California, was presented to the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

"This is the most encouraging news in lung cancer for years"

Mike Unger

Lung cancer kills more than 30,000 people each year in Britain.

Because lung cancer is so fast-growing, a patient who survives for even two or three years is generally considered cured, although five years is the gold standard.

The US team tested the new drug combination on patients with relatively advanced lung cancers.

With conventional treatment, at least 80% of patients with a similar disease would be dead within a year.

Lead researcher Professor David Gandara said: "These survival results exceed those of all other treatment approaches in this group of patients.

"This regimen can now be considered a standard of care."

The California team plans to test the new treatment on more patients, and also to explore using it after surgery when the cancer has not spread so far.

The effects in less advanced disease would be expected to be even better, offering the potential for a cure for patients whose lung cancer is detected early.

Great potential

Dr Ethan Lyn, clinical oncologist from Mount Vernon Hospital, Middlesex, said: "These results show that adding docetaxel (Taxotere) to current treatments has great potential to cure the disease in between a third and a half of patients.

"This treatment could save about 500 lives a year in the UK - 2,500 over five years, where previously death was almost inevitable."

Mike Unger, of the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, said: "Lung cancer is a terrible disease with very poor survival rates compared to other cancers.

"This is the most encouraging news in lung cancer for years, and the medical world is right to be excited.

"However, this is a small study and we are looking forward to the results from a bigger trial to confirm these results."

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