



RADIOTHERAPY CUTS DEATHS FROM HIGH RISK PROSTATE CANCER

MEN TREATED with radiotherapy as well as hormone therapy for advanced prostate cancer were 43 per cent less likely to die from the disease, according to trial results presented at the NCRi Cancer Conference in Liverpool today (Monday).

The Medical Research Council and National Cancer Institute of Canada-funded trial studied 1,200 men with locally advanced prostate cancer. All received standard hormone therapy* and half were given radiotherapy to see if adding radiotherapy increased the number of men who survived the disease.

Preliminary results from the trial show that 79 per cent of men who had hormone therapy alone were still alive after seven years, compared with 90 per cent of men who received radiotherapy with hormone therapy.

Hormone therapy has long been a standard treatment for prostate cancer. Prostate cancer relies on the hormone testosterone to grow, so by controlling testosterone it is possible to slow down or shrink the tumour. While this treatment can work well for several years, for some men the cancer stops responding and starts growing again.

Professor Malcolm Mason, trial leader based at Cardiff University and Velindre Hospital, said: "These exciting results clearly show how radiotherapy increases survival for men with this type of prostate cancer. Currently, we estimate that around 40 per cent of men like those in the trial are given radiotherapy in the UK, and we hope that thanks to these results more men will now be offered this important option."

Half of the men who chose to join the trial were given radiotherapy five days a week for between six and seven weeks as outpatients. The side effects were generally mild –some had discomfort or increased frequency of urination or diarrhoea.

Professor Mason added: "Compared to the advanced radiotherapy techniques used today, those used earlier in the trial were less intensive, so it's possible that the benefits with today's radiotherapy may be even greater."

Kate Law, director of clinical research at Cancer Research UK, said: "This trial offers fresh hope to thousands of men with prostate cancer, preventing hundreds of deaths every year. Radiotherapy is sometimes an overlooked form of treatment but this trial shows how vital it can be."

Professor Max Parmar, Director of the MRC Clinical Trials Unit, says: "The interim results of this trial are extremely encouraging. The side-effects of radiotherapy are minimal and we are delighted that, through the combined efforts of patients, clinicians and researchers across the world, we are providing robust evidence to demonstrate that radiotherapy can benefit men with high risk prostate cancer."

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Notes to Editors:

*Disease specific survival is the percentage of people in a trial who have not died from a specific disease in a certain period of time.

Read the conference abstract here:

<http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/2010abstracts/abstracts/C15.htm>

About the NCRi Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The seventh annual NCRi Cancer Conference is taking place from the 6-9 November 2011 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

About the NCRi

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health (England); Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

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