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New trial aims to treat gastro-oesophageal cancers

The Royal Marsden is leading a major clinical trial to investigate the best treatment options for patients with gastro-oesophageal cancers

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The Phase II PLATFORM trial aims to establish whether patients who have received chemotherapy will benefit from further ?maintenance? treatment, and whether liquid biopsies, using state-of-the-art technologies, can detect early signs of drug resistance.

The trial opened to recruitment at The Royal Marsden earlier this year and is anticipated to recruit 770 patients in up to 90 centres across the UK. Patients whose CT scans show disease stability or reduction following first-line chemotherapy will be randomly assigned to different maintenance treatment options, such as immunotherapy.

The study will also analyse tumour tissue in patients who provide consent for markers that may suggest whether they are likely to respond to treatment. Liquid biopsies will be assessed to see if drug resistance can also be identified from blood samples. This could prevent the overtreatment of patients for whom there is no perceived benefit and limit drug-related side-effects.

The trial protocol was developed by Chief Investigator Professor David Cunningham, Director of the BRC at The Royal Marsden and the ICR.

Professor Cunningham said: "This is one of the first global trials of its kind in this disease setting. There is a real need for more effective treatments, as the average survival rate for people with gastro-oesophageal cancers is just under one year with standard treatment. This is why this research is essential, and is one of the most significant pieces of research in the UK in this disease at the moment."

Information on the optimal treatment of patients with oesophageal and gastric cancers is badly needed, given that they account for 7,701 and 4,758 deaths per year in the UK respectively, according to Cancer Research UK.

"This research is essential, and one of the most significant pieces of research in the UK in this disease at the moment?"

Professor David Cunningham

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