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# New genetic test for children with cancer

Leading UK hospitals will offer children with cancer a test for genetic mutations in their tumours as part of a major new initiative to personalise children's cancer treatment, improve survival rates and reduce side effects.

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400

children at 21 hospitals will receive the genetic test

About 400 children at 21 hospitals will receive the genetic test, which has been designed by researchers at the ICR and The Royal Marsden with funding from UK charity Christopher's Smile. It is designed to pick up key mutations in solid tumours that drive cancer's growth and spread, and works by sequencing 81 different cancer genes.

The initial phase of testing will begin in 2016 and will take about two years, with initial funding from the NIHR BRC at The Royal Marsden and the ICR.

The initiative will assess the reliability and usefulness of the test in a research setting. If successful, it could be used more routinely in the clinic to inform decisions about how patients can be most effectively treated.

The programme will establish which mutations occur most often in children's tumours, and identify those that could be targeted by existing drugs for adult cancers. Where possible, doctors will aim to use the test results to match children to clinical trials of targeted cancer drugs. The initiative will be open to children under the age of 14 with solid tumours.

Tests will first be offered to children treated at The Royal Marsden, and then to patients at 20 other hospitals that form part of the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group.

?Children deserve the very best, modern treatments for cancer?

Unless suffering a relapse, children diagnosed with blood cancers such as leukaemia will not be included, as these cancers respond well to current treatments. Study leader Professor Louis Chesler [6], Professor of Paediatric Cancer Biology at the ICR and Consultant at The Royal Marsden, said:

?Children deserve the very best, modern treatments for cancer, but for too long there have been delays in applying the latest molecular techniques to personalise their treatment.

?A more structured and comprehensive use of genetic testing to match children with cancer to specific targeted treatments could be an incredibly important step towards increasing survival.?

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