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Female patients more likely to survive but experience worse side effects from chemotherapy

Date:

03 June 2019

A recent study has found that female patients with cancer of the oesophagus and stomach are more likely to survive for longer than male patients, but experience more nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea during therapy.

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Female patients more likely to survive but experience worse side effects from chemotherapy

Oncologists from The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust who led the research, in collaboration with the UK Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit (MRC CTU) at University College London, believe the findings may help to tailor the management of patients and also identify those more at risk from specific side effects.

Findings from the study will be presented in a poster session at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting in Chicago, which began on Friday 31st May. The research will also be awarded a Conquer Cancer Foundation of ASCO Merit Award, which recognises organisations and individuals who are making significant contributions to advancing cancer research.

The researchers analysed the data collected from four large randomised clinical trials, which included over 3000 patients who had received chemotherapy before their tumours were surgically removed. It was found that female patients were significantly more likely to experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Female patients were also significantly more likely to live for an average of 5 months longer than males following treatment.

The researchers also investigated whether the age of the patient influenced survival and the

side-effects experienced. It was found that whilst older patients (70 years or more) experienced significantly more neutropenia ? low white blood cells ? whilst receiving chemotherapy, there were no significant differences in cancer-related survival when compared with patients aged below 70.

Senior author Professor David Cunningham OBE, Consultant Medical Oncologist at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust and Director of the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) at The Royal Marsden and the ICR:

?This is a significant finding based on a large scale data set, and furthers our understanding about two types of cancer that affect almost 16,000 people each year in the UK alone.?

?The complexity of cancer is a constant challenge to developing effective treatments, with hundreds of different types affecting patients in different ways. At The Royal Marsden we are focused on developing smarter, kinder and more personalised treatments.?

Researchers are following on from this study by looking at tumour samples from patients enrolled into the trials to identify, molecular markers that may help to predict which patients do well and which don?t.

This study was funded by the Gastrointestinal and Lymphoma Research Unit at The Royal Marsden and the MRC CTU at UCL, and received support from the NIHR BRC at The Royal Marsden and the ICR.

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Women may experience more side effects than men during gastric cancer chemo [5]

Influence of sex on chemotherapy efficacy and toxicity in oesophagogastric: a pooled analysis of 4 randomised trials

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Our Research: Gastrointestinal Cancers ^[6]

Upper gastrointestinal cancers have some of the poorest survival rates of all solid cancers. This theme will carry out research into cancers of the upper and lower gastrointestinal tract.

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