

New treatment to reduce the relapse rate in bladder cancer patients

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A major bladder cancer trial, funded by Cancer Research UK, has shown that adding two commonly used chemotherapy drugs to traditional radiotherapy can reduce the chance of a patient's tumour coming back by a third.

Each year in the UK around 10,300 people are diagnosed with bladder cancer. It is responsible for more than 4,900 deaths per year, primarily in older people, and is the fourth most common cancer in men.

Patients diagnosed with invasive bladder cancer are usually offered either radiotherapy alone - which carries a 40 to 50 per cent chance of the cancer coming back - or surgery to completely remove the bladder.

Scientists at the University of Birmingham, and the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) led a major bladder cancer trial looking at radiotherapy with or without chemotherapy for people with invasive bladder cancer. The Cancer Research UK funded trial was the largest of its kind in bladder cancer in the world.

Professor Nick James, from the University of Birmingham, who led the study with Dr Robert Huddart from The ICR, said: "These trial results are hugely promising, with a significant reduction in the risk of the cancer returning when compared to radiotherapy alone. When we looked at the risk of potentially lethal invasive disease returning the improvement was even more marked."

After two years of follow up the results showed a tumour relapse rate of 33 per cent for patients receiving chemotherapy in addition to radiotherapy, compared to 46 per cent for radiotherapy alone. The reduction in relapse of the most severe type of tumour was even more marked at 18 per cent versus 32 per cent percent.

Professor James added: "Importantly, both chemotherapies used in this trial are cheap widely available drugs that are commonly used in cancer treatment already. This makes their use much more practical."

Its success could mean fewer patients with invasive bladder cancer will need radical surgery to completely remove their bladder, and may provide a lifeline for those too old or weak to survive the operation.

See the [bladder cancer press release \(/news/latest/2010/10/25-Sep-t2010BladderCancer.aspx\)](#)