

Pancreatic Cancer Vaccine Being Trialed in UK



Together with researchers from around the UK, a team of oncologists from The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre has been conducting a project to develop a ground-breaking cancer vaccine that can be utilised alongside traditional treatment methods in order to fight pancreatic cancer.

Pancreatic cancer is the fifth biggest cause of cancer related deaths, claiming more than 9,000 UK lives annually and leaving less than 4% of patients to survive five years or more after diagnosis. Due to the inability in recognising symptoms and the unique formation of the cancer tumour, it is highly challenging to provide patients with the life-saving treatment required.

As chair of medical oncology at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and one of the trial leads for the pancreatic cancer vaccine, Professor Daniel Palmer explained that the innovative cancer vaccine was a form of immunotherapy to be used following initial surgery to remove the tumour in the pancreas. Designed to work by manipulating the body's immune system into recognising microscopic cancer cells, this meant a patient was capable of fighting any remaining cells before the cancer had a chance to form again in other parts of the body.

The UK's first patient to the trial, Mr Allan Helliard, has just been recruited by the Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and the Royal Liverpool University Hospital. He had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in October 2013 and underwent tumour-removing surgery on Christmas Eve.

Commenting on receiving the innovative vaccine alongside his treatment, Helliard said he saw it as an insurance policy in his quest to enjoy the best quality of life with his family. He also expressed his gratitude for his caregivers and for being included in the trials for proving the vaccine life-saving treatment potential. He went on to describe the treatment as simple and fast.

The aim of the trial is to prove that a combined treatment method adding the vaccine to standard chemotherapy should become a standard of care for those patients undergoing surgery for pancreatic cancer and at risk of subsequent relapse.

According to Prof Palmer, pancreatic cancer patients who are well enough to undergo surgery currently receive a course of chemotherapy after the intervention. As this type of cancer is very aggressive however, traces of the disease could still remain and develop into secondary tumours at a later stage. The team of researchers hopes that the vaccine will combat this issue.

In cancer treatments immunotherapy is increasingly becoming more popular, as it aims to train the immune system to specifically attack cancer cells and strengthen the immune system's response to the disease. Three forms of administration are possible and since a simple vaccine instigates the body to spark an instant immune response, the injection is the most common one.

Maggie Blanks, CEO of the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund, described immunotherapy as an exciting area of research, adding that as an organisation dedicated to progressing research for the development of new pancreatic cancer treatments, they were extremely pleased that a potential new therapy had reached the clinical trial stage.

The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre is working collaboratively with other research partners from across the region on over 120 clinical trials to help develop new and innovative ways to treat various types of cancer.

The pancreatic cancer vaccine trial is currently taking place at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre in Wirral, in a number of Norwegian cancer centres and at The Christie, based in Manchester.

Source: [Clatterbridge Cancer Centre](#)

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