



Landmark breast cancer trial investigates new technique to predict effectiveness of treatment

THE LARGEST clinical trial of its kind - which aims to find out if testing breast cancer cells after two weeks of hormone therapy can help predict how well a woman will respond to treatment - is being outlined at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Birmingham today (Tuesday).

Professor Mitch Dowsett based at The Institute of Cancer Research and The Royal Marsden Hospital - one of the three lead researchers on the trial - explains how the biology of breast cancers can vary. This means they develop and respond differently to treatment. The trial will provide a greater understanding of the biology of these breast cancers, how they respond to treatment and how the outcome for patients can be improved.

The trial named POETIC* - funded by Cancer Research UK and Breakthrough Breast Cancer - will study postmenopausal women with early stage, hormone sensitive breast cancer. For the first time patients will be given hormone therapy two weeks before surgery as well as two weeks afterwards. The researchers will compare the biopsy taken at diagnosis with the tumour at the time of surgery, two weeks later, to study molecular effects of treatment in the hopes of planning best therapy for each individual patient.

Surgery is usually the first treatment for early breast cancer. After surgery, women with hormone receptor positive breast cancer will have hormone therapy as part of their treatment - usually for at least five years to help reduce the risk of breast cancer coming back.

In this trial doctors want to find out if giving a type of drug called an aromatase inhibitor, for two weeks before as well as after surgery, helps reduce the risk still further of breast cancer returning.

Around 4000 women from across the UK will be recruited to take part in the trial. Two-thirds of the newly diagnosed patients will be given the new treatment and the others will be treated normally.

Professor Dowsett said: "Breast cancer is increasingly seen as a complex family of cancers. The novel design of the POETIC trial means that with very little change to patients' treatment we will be able to characterise the biology of their tumours far better.

"We hope this will lead to a much improved tailoring of treatment to the individual patient. We are extremely grateful for the support of our colleagues and their patients at over 35 centres throughout the UK who are collaborating with us on POETIC."

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK with more than 45,500 women diagnosed with the disease every year.

Kate Law, Cancer Research UK's director of clinical trials, said: "Without clinical trials like POETIC, we wouldn't know which drugs are best to treat cancer. This trial has the double aim of developing better care as well as providing a greater understanding of the way individual women

and their specific type of breast cancer develops and responds to drugs. It's a promising trial and we look forward to following its progress and seeing the results."

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For media enquiries please contact Paul Thorne in the Cancer Research UK press office on 0121 335 8401 or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059

* POETIC (PeriOperative Endocrine Therapy for Individualizing Care)

The other leads are Professor Ian Smith also of the Royal Marsden Hospital and Professor John Robertson of the City Hospital Nottingham.

Read Professor Dowsett's abstract on the NCRI Cancer Conference website: http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/speakerAbstracts/2009Symp_Mitch_Dowsett.asp

You can find all the abstracts here: http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/Prog_Glance.asp

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/poetic-trial> for more information about the trial.

About Lancaster University

Lancaster is one of only 29 UK universities ranked in the top 200 universities worldwide, coming in at number 170 in the annual THE-QS world university rankings and is currently ranked top University in the North West in the Independent, Guardian, Times and Sunday Times league tables. Lancaster University is the top ranked university in the North and in the top ten of comparable universities according to the 2009 National Student Survey.

Lancaster University's mission to excel in research at the highest international level has been given a boost with the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise revealing that 92% of its research is recognised as world leading or internationally significant and some key areas of research are ranked top in the UK including 1st in UK for Physics, in the UK's top 3 for Bio-medicine part of the newly established School of Health and Medicine and in the UK's top 3 for Art and Design (which at Lancaster includes Music, Theatre, Film and New Media in the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts)

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

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for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The fifth annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 4-7 October 2009 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 **member organisations** for the benefit of **patients**, the public and the scientific community.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

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