



Manchester scientists take on cancer with pioneering radiotherapy treatment

Manchester scientists are testing an emerging therapy called radioimmunotherapy (RIT) in early phase clinical trials, according to a presentation at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Birmingham today (Wednesday).

The trial group, led by Professor Tim Illidge at the University of Manchester has benefited substantially from Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) investment by Cancer Research UK and the National Institute for Health Research to emerge as an international leader in this field.

Radioimmunotherapy works by tagging an antibody to a radioisotope molecule to deliver radiotherapy straight to the tumour. The antibodies act as the 'delivery vehicles' which transport the radiotherapy to precisely target the tumour. This improves accuracy, avoids damaging healthy cells and reduces side effects such as tiredness and sore skin.

The Manchester group is investigating the replacement of some sessions of chemotherapy treatment with radioimmunotherapy (RIT).

An exciting development is using RIT for the first time in previously untreated slow-growing Non Hodgkin lymphoma. The trial involves collaboration with sites in the UK and France and has already recruited 50 patients. The initial results look highly promising with excellent clinical responses. The trial is ongoing and it is hoped if successful may enable some patients to potentially avoid chemotherapy as a first treatment in the future.

One phase II trial* is being run through the National Cancer Research Institute and has recruited 28 patients already. It is investigating the potential of reducing the exposure to chemotherapy by replacing cycles of treatment with (RIT) in people with follicular lymphoma who have relapsed after initial standard treatments.

A further phase II trial** of around 20 patients is exploring the use of radioimmunotherapy treatment in people who have recently been diagnosed with a type of aggressive lymphoma called large B cell lymphoma - and who have not yet received any treatment.

Cancer Research UK's Professor Tim Illidge, trial group head said: "The trials we are running through the Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres have shown positive results. The people on the trials are coping with the new treatments well, which is promising. They experience fewer of the side effects associated with normal systemic chemotherapy such as hair loss, sickness and bowel upsets.

"It is a highly efficient treatment and allows patients to have a good quality of life with minimal disruption."

There are 19 specialist Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres in the UK. The aim of these centres is to bring together cancer doctors, research nurses and lab scientists to make the testing of new treatments in clinical trials quicker and easier.

The ECMC funding in Manchester has enabled development of these trials alongside translational research in conjunction with work with Professor Caroline Dive's group at the Paterson Institute and key collaborations including other ECMCs and centres in France and Italy.

Dr Sally Burtles, director of centres at Cancer Research UK, said: "It is very encouraging that radioimmunotherapy is having good results in patient trials.

"Making the leap from something that looks promising in the laboratory to testing it in patients is one of the most challenging and expensive steps in drug development - and this is the key reason why we've committed to establishing these Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres - to speed up this process and bridge that gap.

"The 19 Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres across the UK give cancer patients new opportunities to participate in early trials for the latest, most innovative and exciting anti-cancer treatments in development."

ENDS

For media enquiries please contact Emma Rigby on 020 7061 8318 or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059

*** SHRIFT Trial: Short CHEmotherapy Radioimmunotherapy In Follicular Lymphoma Trial**

**** FIZZ study: phase II trial of Fractionated Zevalin**

About Lymphoma

Lymphoma means a cancer of the lymphatic system. There are two main types of lymphoma

- **Hodgkin's lymphoma**
- **Non Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL)**

It is important for doctors to be able to tell the difference between Hodgkin's and non Hodgkin's cells. They are two different diseases. And although they are very similar in many ways, the treatment for them is not quite the same.

The lymphatic system runs all through the body, so you can get non Hodgkin's lymphoma just about anywhere. The most common place for it to be noticed first is in the lymph nodes in the neck. It is quite common to find it in the liver or spleen. But it can occur in other body organs as well.

About the ECMC

ECMC stands for 'Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre'. ECMC status has been awarded to 19 centres in the UK that are specialist centres doing lots of research into new cancer treatments. The aim is

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to bring together cancer doctors, research nurses and lab scientists to make clinical trials of new treatments quicker and easier.

The ECMC initiative is funded by Cancer Research UK and the Departments of Health of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are giving a total of £35 million pounds over 5 years to the 19 centres. The centres will use this money to run trials of new and experimental treatments. They will also analyse thousands of blood and tissue samples (biopsies) to help find out more about how treatments work and what happens to cancer cells.

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 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.

Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading charity dedicated to beating cancer through research.
- The charity's groundbreaking work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives. This work is funded entirely by the public.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates double in the last thirty years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of more than 4,800 scientists, doctors and nurses. Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.
- For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call **020 7121 6699** or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org

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