Triple-Acting Drug Boosts Prostate Cancer Survival

A phase III trial of the agent MDV3100 in men with advanced prostate cancer previously treated with docetaxel-based chemotherapy is being stopped early so that the drug can be given to all participants.

Medivation Inc. and Astellas Pharma Inc. announced on November 3 that an interim analysis by the trial’s independent data monitoring committee found that the drug offered a survival benefit compared to placebo among 1,199 men in the trial. The estimated median survival for men treated with MDV3100 was 18.4 months, compared with 13.6 months for men who received placebo.

MDV3100 targets the androgen receptor, which has been the target of previous drugs such as bicalutamide. Johann de Bono, a co-leader of the trial at the Institute of Cancer Research in London, says that MDV3100 not only binds more effectively to the receptor but blocks androgen signaling in 3 separate ways. “This agent works when anti-androgens do not,” he says.

Philip Kantoff, a cancer researcher at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute who was not involved in the study, comments that the positive results from the trials are “great news for patients with prostate cancer and the field at large.” The results, he says, provide “further confirmation that the androgen signaling pathway is important and remains a target even in patients with advanced disease.”

In the past 2 years, several treatments have come to market for advanced prostate cancer. Howard Scher, a co-leader of the trial at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, says that all of the drugs work through different mechanisms, giving patients and their doctors “a range of options.” The challenge now, he says, is determining the best sequence or combination in which to deploy them.

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