

New Pill Treats Deadly Brain Tumors

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
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WASHINGTON (AP) - Patients who have run out of options to fight a particularly deadly brain tumor are about to get a new therapy that could prolong their lives a little with apparently few side effects.

The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday approved the first new chemotherapy for brain tumors in 20 years, a drug called Temodar designed for adults whose anaplastic astrocytomas have failed treatment.

"Temodar is not a wonder drug, ... not the cure drug that we're looking for," cautioned Dr. Alred Yung, oncology chairman at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, who tested the drug.

"But it's better than what we have had," because patients can take Temodar at home with fewer side effects than many alternatives, he said. Temodar, known chemically as

temozolomide, is an oral form of chemotherapy. Patients would take pills at home for five days a month - every month until their tumors seem to stop responding.

About 18,000 brain tumors are diagnosed in the United States each year. Anaplastic astrocytomas are one of the worst kinds, accounting for 2,000 to 3,000 new cases a year. These rapidly growing, hard-to-treat tumors typically kill within two to three years of diagnosis.

Temodar is one of a new class of cancer drugs. Schering-Plough Corp. tested it against anaplastic astrocytomas in patients who relapsed despite surgery, radiation and other chemotherapy.

Twelve of 54 patients - a fairly impressive 22 percent - had their tumors significantly shrink or temporarily disappear, the FDA said.

The study was tiny and did not compare Temodar to older chemotherapies, so it's hard to say if

Temodar will prove better than other cancer drugs that doctors now try as last-ditch efforts. But Yung said he believed that it gave a better response than doctors get from other alternatives - plus it's easier to take.

Not only can patients take the pills at home, but side effects proved milder than for many chemotherapies. The most common reactions were mild nausea and vomiting, headaches and mild immune suppression. Schering-Plough Corp. said side effects were severe in less than 10 percent of patients, and the FDA said most patients had their immune systems recover without having to delay treatment.

Even for those people Temodar helped, it's not a cure, Yung stressed.

But the median duration of Temodar's effect was 12 1/2 months - meaning half of patients began relapsing sooner but half lasted longer.

One of Yung's patients, 59-year-old Larry Sager of Beaumont, Texas,

has seen his tumor stop growing for a full 1 1/2 years - after surgery, radiation and a type of surgically implanted chemotherapy patch all failed.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for" Temodar, Sager said Wednesday. "When I asked him (the doctor) my options, he said not to do anything, and then I'd have two months. That wasn't for me."

Other than slight constipation the five days a month that he takes Temodar, "I had no side effects whatsoever," Sager said.

Temodar, "as a lower toxicity drug, is of paramount importance to these patients," said Naomi Berkowitz, executive director of the American Brain Tumor Association.

Temodar will be available next month, Schering said. Dosage varies according to patients' size, but company figures suggest the average treatment will cost about \$1,500 a month wholesale.

Vacation and Do Good Deeds

Transition Projects, Inc., a social service agency serving more than 9,000 homeless and low-income citizens annually, invites you to serve your community as you vacation this summer. Donations of hygiene supplies and bath towels generally decline during the busy summer months as donors go on vacation and recline in the sun. This summer, Transition Projects is asking vacationers to collect extra bar soaps, shampoos, shav-

ing kits, and other hygiene supplies while they vacation in hotels. Old bath towels (from your home) are always a valuable donation also. Donations can be dropped off 24 hours a day at one of their three shelters: 475 NW Glisan Street, 18 NE 11th Street, or 323 SE Hawthorne.

For more information on donating, please contact Tony Bernal, Volunteer and Fundraising Coordinator, at (503) 823-4930, extension 205.

Study on Allergy Shots & Symptoms

By LINDA A. JOHNSON
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Monthly allergy shots can lessen the torment of hay fever years after the shots are stopped, according to a study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Researchers at the Imperial College School of Medicine in London found that patients who received immunotherapy monthly for three or four years reported weaker symptoms of the grass-pollen allergy three years after stopping the treatment.

"They may never relapse into symptoms as severe as what they had originally," said Samantha Walker, one of the study's authors. "In carefully selected patients, this form of treatment is extremely effective."

Up to 20 percent of people in the

United States and northern Europe have hay fever. Allergy shots were the primary treatment until the 1940s, when antihistamine medications were introduced, but the shots are still widely used.

The researchers asked patients to keep detailed diaries of their hay fever symptoms in 1993, '94 and '95.

The study found little difference between the severity of symptoms reported by patients who had continued allergy-shot treatment during the three-year trial and those who got dummy shots. Those who had never had immunotherapy reported much more severe symptoms than the others.

The researchers also found that the immune systems of the patients who discontinued treatment produced less of the allergen-

Scientists Find Virus Linked With Breast Cancer

SYDNEY, Aug 12 (Reuters) - U.S. scientists have discovered evidence of a virus linked to human breast cancer which they say could lead to the development of a vaccine for the disease.

The virus, almost identical to one causing breast cancer in laboratory mice, was found in more than 85 percent of women with breast cancer, Robert Garry of Tulane University told an international virology conference in Sydney this week.

The human mammary tumor virus, which Garry said was hereditary and non-infectious, was also discovered in 20 percent of people without breast cancer.

"If the virus has the same role in human breast cancer as in mouse breast cancer then this is a very significant step in fighting the disease,"

fighting substances that cause runny noses and other hay fever symptoms than the untreated group. Those who maintained allergy-shot treatment had even fewer of those symptoms.

"It's the clearest demonstration of a long-term effect of immunotherapy that I'm aware of," said Dr. Marshall Plaut, chief of the Allergic Mechanisms Section at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The researchers said their find-

Garry told Reuters on Thursday. "Finding a vaccine shouldn't be all that difficult," he said.

Breast cancer specialists were sceptical, saying the link between a virus and disease was not necessarily causal.

"Fifty percent of women who have breast cancer might also have brown hair, that doesn't mean brown hair causes cancer," John Boyages, director of the New South Wales Breast Cancer Institute, told Reuters.

"This association is interesting, but needs to be replicated in bigger numbers," Boyages said.

The U.S. study was done on 30 breast cancer patients. Garry said his findings could also help the early detection of breast cancer, as the hereditary virus would show up in DNA taken from a simple blood test.

ings and other studies suggest that starting immunotherapy sooner after an allergy appears, particularly in children, could prevent the allergy from becoming severe and prevent development of additional allergies.

"This may lower the bar for me to start people a little earlier on immunotherapy," said Dr. Leonard Bielory, director of the Asthma and Allergy Research Center at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Memory Loss Support Group Forming

(PORTLAND, Ore.) - Kaiser Permanent is forming a support group for the caregivers of people with significant memory loss, such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The professionally facilitated group will meet from 1:30 - 3 p.m. the first Tuesday of every month starting Sept. 7. The meetings are

free and open to the community as well as Kaiser Permanent members. Meetings will be held in Conference Room 2A of Kaiser Permanent's Interstate South Medical Office, 3500 N. Interstate Avenue in north Portland. For information call Elex Tenney, MSW, at (503) 571-3058.

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Jefferson Democrats

1999-2000 School Year

by Roderick Edwards,
Scholar Athlete

Last year the Jefferson Democrats were the center of attention for the media. The reconstitution was one of the main reasons that we were watched so closely. Test scores and overall attendance were a couple of factors involved as well.

The staff last year did very well for the circumstances that they were in. They were expected to come in and change the school in one year. Students also adapted to the new environment of administration, and new faces all around.

This year the class of 2000 hopes to make a great change, to the point where the media will focus on the progress the school is making instead of the things that occur in all schools in the country such as; poor attendance, pregnancy in female students, and low test scores.

For the 99-00 school year the Jefferson Democrats student body will be led by Jesse McCoun, Student Body President, and John Lee, Student Body Vice President. These two aren't just your average high school students; they are Student Scholar Athletes, willing to go the extra mile to make a change in the school, impact the community around the Jefferson area, and make Thomas Jefferson High School the 'School of Champions, School of Pride' once again.

"This year's going to be crackin'; the media will have a whole new perspective on the Democrats of 99-00," says dedicated Senior Class Vice President Neal Brown.

Hopefully this year the student turnout will be higher than last year, and students will realize that education is one of the most important things in their lives at this

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