

# Media release

Thursday 4 December 2014

## New precision medicine trumps chemotherapy in global lung cancer trial

A global clinical trial has shown a new treatment controls advanced lung cancer for twice as long as currently available chemotherapy, changing clinical practice for people with a genetic subset of the disease who have newly diagnosed lung cancer.

The results of the phase 3 study, in which 343 patients from 27 countries with non-small-cell lung cancer, containing a change in the ALK gene, were initially treated with either chemotherapy or an oral ALK-inhibitor, crizotinib, were published this morning in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Associate Professor Ben Solomon, Medical Oncologist at Melbourne's Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and principal investigator and lead author on the international trial, says tumours shrank in 74 percent of patients taking crizotinib, compared with 45 per cent of patients who were initially treated with chemotherapy.

'The results show crizotinib to be the most effective initial treatment for these previously untreated patients, and the targeted therapy, taken orally, blocked cancer growth for twice as long as chemotherapy.'

The results are set to change global treatment practice for people with ALK-positive lung cancer, who comprise around five per cent of all lung cancer cases. Trial participants taking crizotinib also reported fewer and less severe side effects, better control of symptoms related to lung cancer and, importantly, better quality of life than participants receiving chemotherapy.

Associate Professor Solomon says the findings reaffirm a need for wider genetic testing of tumours to ensure people with lung cancer receive the best available treatment, right from the time of diagnosis.

'This is a big step forward in personalised cancer medicine for people with ALK-positive lung cancer, who are often younger and not smokers — it

reinforces the importance of genetic testing so we can identify relevant molecular changes and individualise cancer treatments.

'If we know a patient with non-small-cell lung cancer has an ALK gene mutation, our findings show that we can treat them with the most effective treatment from day one and avoid prescribing unnecessary, less effective chemotherapy.'

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For further information or to organise an interview with Associate Professor Ben Solomon please contact the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre media and communications team on 0417 123 048.

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