

WEB EXCLUSIVES

Zactima Delays Advanced Lung Cancer Growth

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An international phase III trial found the investigational lung cancer drug, Zactima (vandetanib), significantly slowed the time a patient's advanced lung cancer progressed. The trial, which included nearly 1,400 patients who progressed on prior therapy, compared Taxotere (docetaxel) in combination with either placebo or Zactima.

While the data do not show an overall survival advantage, patients on the Zactima arm had a median progression-free survival of 17.3 weeks compared with 14 weeks with Taxotere alone. Zactima works by blocking both vascular endothelial growth factor, which is instrumental in blood vessel growth to the tumor, and the epidermal growth factor receptor, a protein that spurs malignant cell growth.

Common side effects with Zactima are diarrhea, rash, and neutropenia, which can increase the risk of infection. With the progression-free survival benefit demonstrated, AstraZeneca, the drug's manufacturer, is planning to submit the drug for Food and Drug Administration approval in the coming months. The drug is also being tested in thyroid cancer.