

New Cancer Therapy Extends Survival Rate - US Study

LOS ANGELES - Women with advanced ovarian cancer extended their survival rate by 13 months, or about 50 percent, by taking a new combination of chemotherapy agents, according to clinical findings

disclosed Monday.

The study of nearly 400 women found that patients who received the new cancer drug taxol in combination with the standard chemotherapy agent cisplatin survived an average of

37.5 months compared to just 24.4 months for patients who received the standard chemotherapy combination of cisplatin and a drug called cyclophosphamide, or Cytoxan. Taxol was initially made from

the bark of the endangered Pacific yew tree. But in December Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. received Food and Drug Administration approval to make Taxol through a semi-synthetic process.

U.S. for the treatment of ovarian cancer only after other therapies fail. McGuire said the FDA is likely to approve its use as a primary treatment once it reviews the new clinical data.

He said a recent survey by Bristol-Myers indicated that 55 percent of U.S. ovarian cancer patients are already receiving taxol as part of their primary (See *Cancer Therapy*, Pg 22)

The findings were presented by lead researcher William McGuire, professor of medicine at Emory University's Winship Cancer Centre, to a meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Los Angeles.

McGuire said that based on the findings of the study — conducted in conjunction with the Gynecologic Oncology Group of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) — the new taxol-cisplatin combination should become the standard of therapy worldwide for ovarian cancer patients.

"We are actually recommending that this now become the standard of care in this country and around the world for ovarian cancer," McGuire told Reuters in an interview.

He said the study marked the first time in more than 15 years — since cisplatin was developed and incorporated into the primary therapy regimen for ovarian cancer — that patients have shown a notable improvement in survival.

The taxol-cisplatin trial also found that 73 percent of the women receiving the new combination therapy responded favourably, or experienced a reduction in tumour size, compared to only 60 percent in the standard therapy group.

Robert Wittes, acting director of NCI's Division of Cancer Treatment, said the findings are particularly encouraging because ovarian cancer has remained difficult to cure despite its initial responsiveness to chemotherapy.

Taxol is now approved in the

FOR THE LADIES ONE DOOR CLOSES, ANOTHER OPENS

By Bonita Armstrong

We wonder sometimes why events in our lives happen the way they do and at the time they do. I can testify that I have looked back on some situations in my past and questioned why I came in contact with so many mean-spirited people or so many people who were determined to see my demise.

I have pondered over the financial problems that I've had and the bad money decisions I've made. I have often times tried to reason why I was left heartbroken by human



BONITA ARMSTRONG

relationships.

It's easy to concentrate on negativity that has taken place

in our lives. We've all been hurt, strapped and discouraged by someone or something. But we also have learned lessons through these experiences and people we've come in contact with, just as we've learned from positive people and situations.

There is an African saying, "When one door closes, another one opens." While life's lessons are difficult and sometimes painful, they open a path for new found wisdom and understanding. Embrace those lessons and the wisdom that comes with them.

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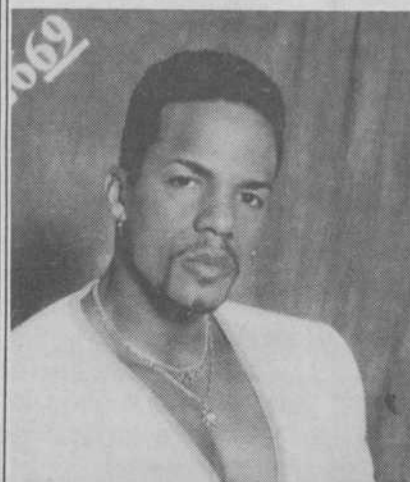
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