Promising Data For Novel Pancreatic Cancer Vaccine

/PRNewswire/ -- A novel pancreatic cancer vaccine shows promise in improving survival and represents a potential breakthrough in the treatment of this deadly disease. Jeffrey Hardacre, MD, of University Hospitals Case Medical Center's Seidman Cancer Center and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine presented results of a Phase 2 clinical trial in patients with pancreatic cancer testing the Algenpantucel-L vaccine today at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, part of Digestive Disease Week in San Diego.

In the plenary session titled "Addition of Algenpantucel-L Immunotherapy to Standard Adjuvant Therapy for Pancreatic Cancer: a Phase 2 Study", Dr. Hardacre presented data from a multi-site, nationwide study involving 70 patients with resected pancreatic cancer which showed favorable 12-month disease-free and overall survival.

"Pancreatic cancer is a deadly disease with long-term survival less than 5 percent," says Dr. Hardacre, Associate Professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and surgical oncologist with UH Case Medical Center, which was the lead institution in the study. "Better treatments are needed to improve survival and we are encouraged by the promising results of this vaccine therapy."

The Algenpantucel-L vaccine is unique from other approaches in that it is designed to trigger the patient's own immune system to destroy cancer cells. Algenpantucel-L, developed by NewLink Genetics Corporation, was added to standard adjuvant therapy for patients who have successfully undergone pancreatic surgical resection.

A pivotal, nationwide Phase 3 study of the vaccine, also led in part by Dr. Hardacre, has begun and will involve up to 722 patients.

"Patients with pancreatic cancer have limited options and there have been few advances for this lethal disease in recent years," says Stan Gerson, MD, Director of the UH Seidman Cancer Center and the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center at Case Western Reserve University. "We are proud that Jeff and our cancer center have played such a significant role in investigating this promising new treatment option."

Cancer of the pancreas is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in the United States, killing more than 35,000 Americans each year. Pancreatic cancer is characteristically aggressive with non-specific initial symptoms, making it difficult to diagnose early. Conventional therapies have little impact on prognosis and disease outcome.

Surgical resection of the tumor is currently the only chance for a cure. Without resection, overall median survival is four to six months with an estimated five-year survival rate of 0.4 percent to 5 percent.

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