

Drug can delay ovarian cancer relapses: study

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A drug already approved for treating kidney cancer was successful at delaying the return of advanced ovarian cancer by an average of nearly six months, a clinical study released Saturday found.

About 70 percent of patients with advanced [ovarian cancer](#) experience a relapse following surgery and chemotherapy and need to resume [aggressive treatments](#). The deadly disease's cure rate is just 20 to 25 percent.

German researchers found that the GlaxoSmithKlein drug pazopanib (Votrient) extended the median time to disease worsening to 17.9 months compared with 12.3 months for patients given a placebo in a phase III clinical trial.

"Our findings show that we finally have a drug that can maintain control over ovarian [cancer growth](#) achieved through initial treatments," said lead author Andreas du Bois, a professor of gynecologic oncology at Kliniken Essen Mitte in Germany.

"If pazopanib is approved for ovarian cancer, many patients will experience longer disease-free and chemotherapy-free periods. During this time, the patient keeps control over the disease instead of the disease having control over the patient's life."

An estimated 22,240 new cases of ovarian cancer are expected to be detected in the United States in 2013, and 14,030 women are expected to die from the disease this year.

There are currently no drugs approved in the United States as maintenance therapies for patients who've undergone treatment for advanced ovarian cancer, although Europe has approved Genentech's bevacizumab (Avastin) for that use.

Pazopanib is an [oral drug](#) that blocks several targets involved in the growth of tumors and their blood vessels.

The study was presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO.)

"Relapses remain all too common for women with advanced ovarian cancer," said Carol Aghajanian, an ASCO spokeswoman and [gynecologic cancers](#) expert.

"This large trial shows us that targeting multiple molecular cancer drivers can have a substantial impact on this cancer's ability to grow, giving our patients significantly longer time before relapse."

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