

Adding chemotherapy to radiation treatment not effective in treating vulvar cancer

19 September 2014, by Courtney Mccrimmon

(Medical Xpress)—The addition of chemotherapy to post-surgical radiation treatment is not effective in treating vulvar cancer, according to Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC research presented this week in San Francisco at the 56th annual meeting of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO). Provided by University of Pittsburgh

Vulvar cancer is extremely rare, accounting for just 4 percent of gynecologic cancers and 0.6 percent of cancers women face in the U.S. each year. Led by Sushil Beriwal, M.D., associate professor with the department of [radiation oncology](#) at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and [radiation oncologist](#) at Magee, this study identified patients diagnosed with vulvar cancer between 1998 and 2011 who had undergone surgery to remove the cancer and required adjuvant [radiation therapy](#) because the disease had spread to their lymph nodes.

The study utilized the National Cancer Database, a nationwide oncology outcomes database, to identify 1,087 patients who underwent [chemotherapy treatment](#) in addition to radiation therapy after their initial surgery to remove the cancer. The study took into account factors including age, race, insurance coverage, tumor size and spread of the disease.

"Our study found that overall, the addition of chemotherapy to adjuvant radiation therapy did not improve patient survival," said Dr. Beriwal. "While retrospective studies do impose some limits on our conclusion, we found that at the very least, use of concurrent chemotherapy should be carefully evaluated on an individual basis."

While the study didn't confirm a benefit of the addition of [adjuvant chemotherapy](#) to treatment, Dr. Beriwal said it is important to share the findings because they move researchers one step closer to understanding how to most effectively treat vulvar cancer.

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