

Anti-fungal drug shows promise as potential new cancer treatment

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A common anti-fungal treatment has joined the ranks of drugs that may be suitable for use in treating cancer, according to research from the Repurposing Drugs in Oncology (ReDO) project published in *ecancermedicalscience*.

The ReDO project is an international collaboration of anticancer researchers dedicated to promoting the cause of common medicines which may represent an untapped source of novel therapies for [cancer](#).

In partnership with *ecancer*, the ReDO project is publishing a series of papers on drugs that have enough clinical evidence to be taken to clinical trials.

Itraconazole is a drug used to treat a broad range of fungal infections, including skin and nail infections.

It also has a lot of potential as a new [cancer treatment](#), according to the ReDo project.

"Itraconazole shows potential in a number of areas with high unmet patient needs, particularly in non-small cell [lung cancer](#) and possibly in some rarer malignancies," says Pan Pantziarka, PhD, member of the ReDO project and the Anticancer Fund.

"That there are a number of [clinical trials](#) on-going in a range of different cancers is an encouraging start."

Itraconazole, a generic agent that costs relatively little, shows some evidence of efficacy in [metastatic prostate cancer](#) - which would make it an attractive proposition given the high costs associated with cancer treatments such as abiraterone, Pantziarka notes.

This could make [itraconazole](#) an attractive cancer treatment - not only in low and middle income countries, but also in over-stretched health

systems such as the NHS.

But there are a few roadblocks that must be addressed before this anti-fungal medication can reach the anti-cancer market.

"Our intention in collecting data on repurposed drugs is to do more than merely bringing it to the attention of the medical community," says study author Lydie Meheus, PhD, of the Anticancer Fund, Belgium.

"It is rather obvious that the pharma industry is not interested in taking the driver's seat when we are dealing with commercially neglected drugs," says Meheus.

"Consequently we are currently in a catch-22 situation, since only the 'owners' of a market authorization can apply for a new indication!"

But these repurposed [anticancer drugs](#) such as antifungals and painkillers may represent the future of cancer drug research, according to leaders of the ReDO project.

The researchers hope that increased awareness will bring these medications out of the medicine cabinet - and possibly into cancer care.

More information: Pantziarka Pan, Sukhatme Vidula, Bouche Gauthier, Meheus Lydie and Sukhatme Vikas P (2015) Repurposing Drugs in Oncology (ReDO)—itraconazole as an anti-cancer agent *ecancer* 9 521.

[ecancer.org/journal/9/521-repu ... nti-cancer-agent.php](http://ecancer.org/journal/9/521-repu...nti-cancer-agent.php)

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