

Antihistamines may help patients with malignant melanoma

11 May 2020



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Can a very common allergy medicine improve survival among patients suffering from the serious skin cancer, malignant melanoma? A new study from Lund University in Sweden indicates that this may be the case.

"Previous studies have shown that the same antihistamines have survival benefits in [breast cancer](#). Now we see the same thing concerning [malignant melanoma](#). However, more research is required to confirm the results," emphasizes Professor Håkan Olsson. He is one of the researchers behind the study, which was recently published in the research journal *Allergy*.

In the study, the researchers examined the use of six antihistamines in patients diagnosed with malignant melanoma; desloratadine, cetirizine, loratadine, clemastine, ebastine and fexofenadine.

They have matched information from three large registers (the prescribed drug register, [cancer](#) register and cause of death register) for everyone in Sweden between 2006 and 2014 who received their first diagnosis of skin cancer, a total of 24 562

individuals. Of these individuals, 1 253 were [antihistamine](#) users. Most used desloratadine (395) cetirizine (324), loratadine (251) or clemastine (192). The other antihistamines were used by considerably fewer individuals. The follow-up of individuals was carried out on 31 December 2018.

"We observed improved survival among those who used desloratadine and to a certain extent also loratadine, particularly in the age group 65 and older, when we compared with those who had not used antihistamines. The use of the other antihistamines showed no significant survival effect. The use of desloratadine and loratadine also seemed to reduce the risk of getting a new malignant melanoma," says Håkan Olsson.

"The finding is interesting for a future drug against [melanoma](#) and may also help in advanced stages of the disease. In addition, the medicines have virtually no side effects."

The research team is now planning [animal experiments](#) and randomized studies in order to understand the mechanisms behind the effect, the appropriate dose and optimum treatment period.

"We are collaborating with researchers in Barcelona and Stockholm. In Lund, we are underway with studies in both animal and [human subjects](#), in which doses of antihistamines will be compared with the patients who do not take antihistamines, in order to measure the treatment effect," concludes Håkan Olsson.

More information: Ildikó Fritz et al. Desloratadine and loratadine use associated with improved melanoma survival, *Allergy* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/all.14273](#)

Provided by Lund University

APA citation: Antihistamines may help patients with malignant melanoma (2020, May 11) retrieved 26 August 2022 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-antihistamines-patients-malignant-melanoma.html>

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