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## World's first ovarian cancer vaccine on trial

Greenslopes Private Hospital is one of the sites participating in the trial of the world-first vaccine to treat ovarian cancer.

The trial being conducted through the clinical trials unit of the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation is targeted at patients who have achieved first or second complete remission after surgery and chemotherapy for ovarian cancer.

Medical Oncologist & Principal Investigator, Dr Jeff Goh said that a number of patients had recently started on the trial at Greenslopes Private Hospital receiving the CVac vaccine as part of the multi-centre international study. The CVac vaccine is proudly an Australian innovation.

"This study was designed to determine the effectiveness of the CVac vaccine in delaying or even preventing ovarian cancer recurrence/ relapse. The other aims are to determine its safety and also whether it improves overall survival. The vaccine trial is primarily a maintenance therapy trial after completion of standard chemotherapy and is generally well tolerated", Dr Goh said.

"In other words, the trial was designed with the intention of keeping ovarian cancer sufferers in remission longer and delaying or even preventing a relapse of the disease. This will hopefully result in a higher cure rate, for some patients."

The vaccine therapy works by stimulating patients' own immune system to attack the ovarian cancer. Patients' white blood cells involved in immunity, called dendritic cells are taken from ovarian cancer patients' blood by a process called leukapheresis. The patient's blood is circulated through a special filter that takes out only the dendritic cells needed to make the vaccine. These cells are processed in a laboratory, and then combined (conjugated) with a protein called mucin-1, which is present in the majority of ovarian tumours cells. The vaccine is then injected under the surface of patients' skin, activating immune cells called T Cells and recruiting them to locate and destroy ovarian cancer cells expressing the mucin-1 protein.

In Australia each year more than 1000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and more than 800 women die from ovarian cancer. Only 40 percent of women with ovarian cancer will be alive after five years, however if diagnosed early this could double to 80 per cent. Unfortunately, ovarian cancer is generally diagnosed at a late stage and only 20-30% of patients with late stage disease survive beyond 5 years. 76% of these patients relapse within a year of chemotherapy.

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***Medical Oncologist, Dr Jeff Goh available for interview***