

Herceptin plus taxol highly effective in lower-risk breast cancer patients

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A remarkable 98.7 percent of certain lower-risk breast cancer patients were cancer free for at least three years after taking a combination of the drugs Herceptin and Taxol, a study has found.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

The study is the first major trial to examine the Herceptin-Taxol combination in [patients](#) who have a type of breast cancer with the biology known as small, node-negative, HER2+. Results were presented during the 2013 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

"This is great news for patients and their physicians," said Kathy Albain, MD, of Loyola University Medical Center, who is one of the co-authors of the national multicenter study. "This study identifies a new treatment option for this population of patients that is highly effective and has minimal side effects." First author is Sara Tolaney, MD, of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

About 1 in 4 breast patients have HER2+ [breast cancer](#), meaning their cancer cells have a receptor protein on the surface known as HER2 (Human Epidermal growth factor Receptor 2).

Herceptin is part of the well-established standard-of-care for higher-risk HER2+ patients. But there currently is no single standard treatment patients with the for lower-risk HER2+ biology. In these patients, their tumors are small and the cancer has not spread to lymph nodes. Some of these patients currently are not receiving Herceptin, while others are being treated with Herceptin plus more toxic chemotherapy drugs.

The new study finds that an in-between treatment – Herceptin plus a single chemotherapy drug Taxol – is highly effective, with few adverse effects. Of the 406 patients studied, only 3.2 percent experienced severe neuropathy and only 0.5 percent experienced symptoms of [congestive heart failure](#), which resolved after they discontinued Herceptin.

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