

Breakthrough drug approval signals great advances in lung cancer treatment

October 8 2015

The International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC) says the move by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to grant accelerated approval for a cutting-edge lung cancer treatment is a positive step forward that may help many patients improve their survival.

In early October, the FDA granted [accelerated approval](#) for pembrolizumab (Keytruda) to treat [patients](#) with advanced (metastatic) non-small cell [lung cancer](#) (NSCLC) whose disease continued to progress after other treatments, and with tumors that have a protein called PD-L1.

"This is great news for patients and physicians working together on lung cancer treatment plans," said Dr. Fred R. Hirsch, Professor of Medicine and Pathology at the University of Colorado Cancer Center and School of Medicine and CEO of the IASLC. "This drug represents important progress in the lung [cancer treatment](#) that can extend lifespans and make a real difference."

Personalized medicine - treating patients with therapies based on the molecular characteristics of a patient's tumor - can add many months or years for those patients whose tumors harbor specific abnormalities. Doctors then treat patients with therapies specifically targeting these abnormalities. Therefore, molecular characterization ("testing") of the patient's tumor is crucial for the right choice of therapy.

"These days, we are discovering several new active drugs for patients with lung cancer and we are getting closer to finding ways to make lung cancer a treatable, chronic disease." Dr. Hirsch said.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer related deaths throughout the world. Lung cancer causes more than 1.6 million deaths globally every year; more deaths than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. Doctors diagnose the majority of lung cancer cases (~60 percent) after the disease has already spread to distant areas, which makes the disease more difficult to treat. However, for the first time in many decades, specific targeted therapies and immunotherapy treatment are providing hope to the many [lung cancer patients](#) for significantly increased and better life perspective.

Provided by International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer

Citation: Breakthrough drug approval signals great advances in lung cancer treatment (2015, October 8) retrieved 20 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-10-breakthrough-drug-great-advances-lung.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.