

Ottawa arm of clinical trial helping to extend the lives of men with prostate cancer

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA, July 31, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Recent results from the SPARTAN clinical trial have identified a drug that can help men facing prostate cancer live years longer before their disease spreads.

When prostate cancer recurs after local therapy (surgery and/or radiation), standard treatment is hormonal therapy or Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT). Eventually, many of these cancers develop resistance to hormone therapy, making them castrate-resistant and even more difficult to treat. Historically, there have been no effective therapies for castrate-resistance that could delay spread and progression of the cancer. Patients often become anxious during this time, as they and their care team must wait for the cancer to spread to bone or vital organs before offering further therapies. While there have been many advances in prostate cancer treatment over the last decade, results from the recent SPARTAN Trial show the longest period of metastasis-free survival as compared to any other available treatment.

“Metastasis accounts for a vast majority of cancer-related deaths, and so preventing or delaying the cancer from spreading obviously remains an important treatment goal,” explains Dr. Shawn Malone, Radiation Oncologist at the Ottawa Hospital and an investigator on the trial. “Until SPARTAN, there were no approved treatments for men with castration-resistant prostate cancer (CRPC) before their cancer metastasizes and it was a challenging waiting game. So the preliminary results of the trial are exciting because they are showing a noticeable improvement in the length of time these men are living metastasis-free.”

The SPARTAN study, sponsored by Aragon Pharmaceuticals, Inc., is a Phase III, double blind controlled trial and examines the effects of a drug called Apalutamide (Earleda) on patients with non-metastatic CRPC. Patients receive ADT (androgen deprivation therapy) along with either a placebo drug or a 240mg daily tablet of apalutamide.

The Ottawa Hospital hosted a local arm of the SPARTAN trial, and Dr. Shawn Malone cites investment from organizations like the [Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation](#) as a significant driver for success in this and many other cancer clinical trials in the Ottawa region.

“Ottawa is home to some of the most talented researchers in the country who are working on leading-edge projects and shaping the future of cancer care,” says Linda Eagen, President & CEO of the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation. “Thanks to our generous donors, the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation is one of the only organizations funding local cancer clinical trials, and our ongoing funding gives more families in our community access to this life saving program.”

Preliminary results of the SPARTAN study show a strong trend of improving survival for men with CRPC. The average period of metastasis-free survival was 40.5 months (3 years, 4.5 months) on the drug, vs. 16.2 months on the placebo. The secondary outcomes measured in the study (progression-free survival and time to symptomatic progression) were also significantly longer with apalutamide than with the placebo. Overall, the risk of metastasis or death was more than 70% lower for men treated with apalutamide than it was for those receiving the placebo.

“What we’re seeing is a longer period without metastasis with a drug that is very well tolerated,”

explains Dr. Malone. "Participants of the trial experienced few side effects on the drug, and either delayed or prevented the onset of symptoms related to metastasis. So patients are living longer and with a very good quality of life."

Apalutamide is approved by Health Canada and is currently part of a patient access program. It is not yet funded by Cancer Care Ontario.

The SPARTAN study also predicts the possibility that a treatment like apalutamide might be effective in treating men who already have metastatic disease, offering valuable information and hope for future studies.

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About the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation

The Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation is the voice for cancer survivorship in Eastern Ontario, and a leader in our community in providing local residents with increased access to person-centred care through Cancer Coaching, innovative cancer research and a world-class clinical trials program. For more information, please visit www.ottawacancer.ca.

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