
NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

BC Cancer Agency Researchers Develop Prognostic Test for Follicular Lymphoma

Vancouver – BC Cancer Agency researchers have published important findings with the power to predict patient response to existing treatment regimens. The results were released today in *The Lancet Oncology*.

The study, carried out in collaboration with scientists at the University Hospital of the Ludwig-Maximilians, University Munich, and collaborators at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston developed a test coined m7-FLIPI, which identifies follicular lymphoma patients at the highest risk for treatment failure.

Follicular lymphoma is a subtype of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and while effective treatments exist, approximately 20 per cent of patients respond poorly or not at all to current therapies.

Dr. Randy Gascoyne, distinguished scientist, BC Cancer Agency and scientific director of the Centre for Lymphoid Cancers along with PhD candidate and lymphoma fellow Dr. Robert Kridel, working closely with collaborators, have spent the past two years studying the genetic factors that cause treatment failure in follicular lymphoma.

“The work of Dr. Gascoyne, Dr. Kridel and other researchers has the ability to identify lifesaving solutions for patients living with follicular lymphoma,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “Their findings are a great example of BC’s role as a leader in cancer treatment, prevention and the cutting edge research conducted through the BC Cancer Agency.”

“We set out to determine, at the time of diagnosis, which patients’ disease will have sustained responses after treatment and whether new genetic data could help inform which patients are at risk for developing progressive lymphoma so clinicians would be able to offer these high-risk patients more effective therapies,” said Dr. Gascoyne, senior co-author of the paper.

“The m7-FLIPI could be extremely significant for the medical community, changing the story for high-risk patients who are currently destined to not respond well to standard treatment.”

Identifying these patients up-front could be used to help determine candidates for testing novel therapies or enrollment on clinical trials.

The test was built upon an existing clinical risk factor test known as FLIPI, the Follicular Lymphoma International Prognostic Index. The team, directed by Dr. Oliver Weigert in Munich, developed improved prognostic algorithms and added the mutational status for seven genes known to be significant factors in the development and progression of follicular lymphoma.

m7-FLIPI is the first prognostic model in follicular lymphoma that accounts for clinical factors and genetic mutations. It is an effective tool that has the power to save and extend patients' lives by steering clinicians toward more innovative and effective treatment options.

Looking ahead, m7-FLIPI would be utilized in a clinical setting to test all new follicular lymphoma patients at diagnosis in order to identify the roughly 25 per cent who harbor the most aggressive disease. Traditionally, these patients would receive standard therapy, which is currently prescribed to all follicular lymphoma patients and highly effective for many, yet not potent enough for up to a quarter of people diagnosed.

Quick facts:

- Over 1,000 British Columbians will be diagnosed with a form of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma this year, and approx. 300 of those will have follicular lymphoma.
- Follicular Lymphoma is one of two main subtypes of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.
- Approximately 25 per cent of follicular lymphoma patients will not respond well to standard therapy.
- The five-year survival rate for follicular lymphoma patients considered “low-risk” is approx. 91 per cent.
- The five-year survival rate for follicular lymphoma patients considered “high-risk” is approx. 53 per cent.
- m7-FLIPI combines clinical risk factor testing with mutational status for seven known mutations associated with follicular lymphoma.
- m7-FLIPI accurately identifies patients with disease that would be destined to experience early treatment failure.
- Prognostic testing can lead to more effective, life-saving treatment solutions from the onset.
- The BC Cancer Foundation has provided over \$4 million to fund research in the BC Cancer Agency's Centre for Lymphoid Cancers over the past five years.

The BC Cancer Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. For more information, visit www.bccancer.bc.ca.

The BC Cancer Foundation is the bridge that connects philanthropic support and research breakthroughs in cancer knowledge. As the fundraising partner of the BC Cancer Agency and the largest funder of cancer research in this province, we enable donors to make contributions to leading-edge research that has a direct impact on improvements to cancer care for patients in British Columbia. We fund with the goal of finding solutions. Visit www.bccancerfoundation.com to make a donation or to learn how you can make a difference in the lives of those affected by cancer.

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To arrange an interview: BC Cancer Agency media pager 604-871-5699

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