

British cancer patients first to try vaccine

Oliver Moody

British cancer patients will be among the first in the world to try a "universal" vaccine under plans for a trial to start this autumn.

The inexpensive treatment turns the body's virus-fighting defences against tumours by taking a sort of genetic "mugshot" to cancer-killing T cells. In theory it can be adapted to attack any form of cancer and should offer lasting protection against a relapse, much like a vaccine against a virus.

Scientists from the University of Southampton are planning to test the technology on between 30 and 40 patients with head and neck cancers.

The vaccine therapy, developed at Johannes Gutenberg University in Germany, has shown promising early results in three people with metastatic skin cancer, according to a study published yesterday in the journal *Nature*.

Peter Johnson, professor of medical oncology at Southampton and the chief clinician for Cancer Research UK, said the plan was to try the vaccine in combination with an antibody therapy. He said: "Cancer vaccines have been difficult to make effective in the past. We've spent many years researching different types. The new design seems to be much more potent. I think this particular approach looks very exciting."

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