

Treatment found to shrink tumours in patients with terminal leukaemia

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◆ Terminal leukaemia patients have been offered hope after a new therapy was shown to shrink or make tumours disappear in 70 per cent of patients.

The treatment, called CAR T-cell immunotherapy, extracts immune cells from a cancer patient and modifies them in a lab so they can recognise leukaemia cells. The engineered cells are then infused back into the patient where they multiply, hunt down and kill the cancer cells.

In a trial by researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, in Seattle, 24 patients with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) who had failed to respond to traditional chemotherapy were given modified immune cells. After six and a half months, 17 out of 24 of the patients had seen tumours shrink or disappear.

"It was not known whether CAR T-cells could be used to treat these high risk chronic lymphocytic leukaemia patients," said Dr Cameron Turtle, lead author of the research published in *The Journal of Clinical Oncology* and an immunotherapy researcher at Fred Hutchinson.

"Our study shows that CAR T-cells are a highly promising treatment."

Around 9,500 people are diagnosed with blood cancer leukaemia each year.