

One in six cancer patients denied the drugs they need

By Laura Donnelly HEALTH EDITOR

ONE in six cancer patients is being denied drugs recommended by their doctors, a study has found.

The Institute of Cancer Research, which carried out the study, said radical action was needed to cut drug costs and speed up access to life-extending medications.

The survey found 16 per cent had been denied a drug recommended by their consultant, or faced a delay in receiving it.

Almost half of those who tried to enrol in clinical trials of new treatments were unable to do so.

The institute said too many patients were being denied drugs, or forced to wait too long for them, because NHS rationing bodies did not prioritise new types of treatment.

Its research found the average time from when a cancer drug is patented to

approval by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (Nice) is now more than 14 years.

The institute is urging officials to rewrite the rules, in order to fast-track those drugs with the greatest potential.

It also calls for "radical action" to lower the cost of new drugs to the health service, including introducing pricing based on how successful the drugs are in treating patients.

Professor Paul Workman, the chief executive of the ICR, said: "We will only make step-change advances against cancer by giving patients access to genuinely innovative new drugs, which can attack cancer in brand new ways, or as part of innovative combinations to overcome the challenge of drug resistance.

"We need drug regulators and Nice to be faster and more flexible in their assessment of evidence, especially for the most innovative treatments."