

Media Release

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Thalidomide fails to help patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma

PERTH: A Dutch-Australian collaborative study has found thalidomide does not slow progression nor improve survival in patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma (MPM), a scientific conference of cancer experts in Perth will be told today (17/11).

Patients of MPM have poor prognosis and despite treatment with standard chemotherapy, most tumours recur within two years.

Lead researcher Dr Paul Baas, from the Netherlands Cancer Institute, said the research aimed to establish whether the inclusion of the anti-vascular agent, thalidomide, in patients' treatment regimes would slow the progress of the tumour growth.

"Thalidomide has been shown to be effective in the treatment of haematological cancers such as leukaemia, so it was logical to test the potential of the drug in solid tumours."

Dr Baas said the study monitored 207 patients who had not shown signs of progression on a previous specific drug regime. The patients, with a median age of 64, were observed over a period of approximately 12 months. They undertook CT scanning of the thorax and a physical examination at least every two months.

"The researchers discovered that while there was minimal toxicity associated with the use of thalidomide, there was no evidence of benefit in terms of slowing progression of the disease, nor in improving survival.

"This means we must reconsider our strategies and assess other options such as surgery, radiation therapy and other targeted agents."

[Dr Paul Baas will present his research at 11am today \(17/11\) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting. Room 6, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.](#)

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