

Brain cancer vaccine shows promise

By ACSH Staff — October 5, 2010

Patients with the brain cancer glioblastoma the disease that killed Sen. Ted Kennedy are usually dead within a year. That's why results of a [small study](#) [1] of a brain cancer vaccine made by Celldex Therapeutics Inc. are so encouraging. Eighteen patients with glioblastoma treated with the therapy lived an average of 26 months compared to 15 months for the 17 patients in a control group who received standard treatment, including the chemotherapy drug Temodar.

I'm the first one to downplay these \$100,000 drugs that extend life expectancy from 15 months to 17 months, says Dr. Ross, but this is substantial it's almost double.

Lead researcher Dr. John Sampson of Duke University, whose team worked on the results [published](#) [2] in *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, [tells](#) [3] Reuters that many of the patients in the study are still alive after five years. That is pretty unusual with this disease, he said.

The vaccine targets a mutation in a gene that fuels cancer cell growth; Reuters notes it's another example of the promise of cancer immunotherapies, treatments that enlist the body's immune system to combat cancer. Earlier this year the FDA [approved](#) [4] the first cancer immunotherapy, Dendreon Corp's prostate cancer vaccine Provenge, while Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.'s drug ipilimumab [shows potential](#) [5] to treat prostate cancer and advanced melanoma by activating the patient's own immune system.

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