

Violent increase in new cases of aggressive brain cancer - 2012

The number of men diagnosed with the most malignant form of brain cancer (Glioblastoma) has almost doubled over the last ten years. - We have no idea what it is due to and work hard to crack the code for a better treatment than the one we can offer today, says chief physician Hans Skovgaard Poulsen from Rigshospitalet. Today, the average life expectancy is just one and a half years after the diagnosis is made.

A sharp rise in the number of new cases of the highly aggressive and malignant form of brain cancer, Glioblastoma, is now prompting doctors and researchers to intensify laboratory work in hopes of finding a more effective treatment.

Hans Skovgaard Poulsen: - It is a frightening development we have seen in recent years.

-We must acknowledge that the current forms of treatment - surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy - are completely inadequate, says chief physician Hans Skovgaard Poulsen from Rigshospitalet.

Only every 10th lives longer than five years Only barely one in ten patients with this cancer is alive after five years. The number of new cases has been rising sharply over the past half-dozen years, so that Glioblastoma now affects around 260 Danes each year. And the increase includes men in particular.

Scary development -It's a scary development. And we simply do not know the cause. Therefore, we must very quickly begin to shed light on what this eerie increase may be due to, says Hans Skovgaard Poulsen.

Today, patients are treated by highly trained interdisciplinary teams, but despite intensive efforts, cancer is virtually impossible to eradicate. The brain tumor often returns quickly.

The Danish Cancer Society supports -We have tried to treat patients with many new substances, both biological and chemical, in the hope of improving survival, but our progress is unfortunately extremely modest, admits Hans Skovgaard Poulsen, who has just received 1.5 million kroner from the Danish Cancer Society's Scientific Committee to develop new relevant cell models.

For Hans Skovgaard Poulsen and the research team around the Radiation Biology Laboratory, it is crucial to be able to identify new angles of attack in order to be able to kill the extremely malignant cancer cells in the brain tumor. First via experiments on relevant cancer cell models in the laboratories and - if the results prove positive - subsequently on the patients. It is thus a prerequisite for being able to improve the treatment of patients that such good results have previously been achieved via preclinical models that a solid decision basis exists.

-We have tried to treat with new substances that attack the cells more broadly, and some that go more targeted to the individual cancer cell. Substances that we know help with other cancers, but when we test them on the malignant brain tumors, they have no effect, Hans Skovgaard Poulsen explains.

Avastin benefits

The most effective drug that in recent years has also been shown to benefit Glioblastoma patients is Avastin - the biologically targeted agent that works by blocking the growth of the blood vessels that supply the cancerous nodule with nutrients and oxygen.

-But we really need a research breakthrough if we are to succeed in achieving a markedly improved survival, states Hans Skovgaard Poulsen. Read more: Brain tumors Gliomas, including Glioblastoma

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