

THREE NEW CANCER DRUGS NOW AVAILABLE IN ONTARIO*McGuinty Government Investing \$50 Million To Improve Treatment Options***NEWS**July 2, 2008
2008/nr-037

Ontario is investing \$50 million to give cancer patients better treatment options with three new drugs - including Avastin for the treatment of colorectal cancer.

\$30 million over the next three years will fund Avastin, a groundbreaking drug that works by cutting off the blood supply specifically to cancerous tumours rather than affecting all the cells in the body. Clinical trials have shown that Avastin is most effective when used as the initial treatment for advanced colorectal cancer.

The average length of survival for patients who receive Avastin in combination with other chemotherapy treatments is close to 2 years, compared to 15 months for patients who do not receive Avastin as part of their therapy.

Ontario is also providing approximately \$20 million in funding over the next three years for Sprycel to treat acute lymphoblastic leukemia and Alimta to treat non-small cell lung cancer. Sprycel and Alimta both provide new options for patients who have not had success with initial cancer drug treatments.

QUOTES

"This is all about improving treatment options for Ontarians who are suffering from cancer," said David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, "The McGuinty government is committed to funding new and innovative cancer drugs, and we're determined to get more Ontarians screened and tested as early as possible."

"We are committed to improving access to therapies that have proven medical benefits," said Helen Stevenson, Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Officer of the Ontario Public Drug Programs. "Many patients in Ontario will benefit from the availability of Avastin as first-line therapy through our publicly funded drug programs. We continue to be transparent in our decision-making and ensure that all of our decisions have clear, clinical outcomes to support them."

"For Ontario patients with advanced colorectal cancer, today's announcement is great news," said Dr. Jim Biagi, Academic Oncologist, Cancer Centre of South-eastern Ontario and Co-Chair, Gastrointestinal Cancer Disease Site Group, Cancer Care Ontario. "Patients now have access to Avastin, a therapy that when added to standard chemotherapy can improve their outlook"

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has invested \$53 million in colorectal cancer drugs over the past three years.
- Colorectal cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in Ontario with 3,250 deaths a year. Each year, 7,800 people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Regular screening is vital because there are no early warning symptoms of the disease, which develops from tiny growths inside the colon or rectum called polyps.
- Ontario has created a province-wide screening program called [ColonCancerCheck](#) in collaboration with Cancer Care Ontario. Through the program, eligible Ontarians can obtain a take-home colorectal cancer screening kit from their health care provider or by contacting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's INFOLine at 1-866-410-5853.

LEARN MORE

For more information on Avastin, visit [the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#).

Learn more about Ontario's [Colon Cancer Check](#) initiative.

Visit [Cancer Care Ontario](#) online.