

## **NEW DRUG ZAPS FATAL DISORDER OF BLOOD CELLS Study of Revlimid wows researchers**

Associated Press

ORLANDO—Doctors were just hoping to treat symptoms when they gave people with a deadly blood disorder a drug to reduce the need for transfusions.

To their astonishments, signs of the disease itself disappeared in nearly half of them.

Specialists said the experimental drug, Revlimid, now looks like a breakthrough and the first effective treatment for many people with myelodysplastic syndrome, or MDS, which is even more common than leukemia.

“It may be, if not eradicating the disease, putting it into what I would call deep remission,” said Dr. David Johnson, a cancer specialist at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center who is familiar with but had no role in the research. He said Revlimid is not yet on the market.

MDS refers to a group of disorders caused by the bone marrow not making enough healthy blood cells. About 15,000 to 20,000 cases are diagnosed each year nationwide, and as many as 50,000 Americans have it now. Blood transfusions are needed about every eight weeks.

Researchers don't know how it works other than it boosts the immune system. But in a new study, doctors tested it on 115 people who have the most common chromosome abnormality that causes MDS.

After about six months, 66 percent no longer needed transfusions, said study leader, Dr. Alan List of the U. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa. Most surprising was that signs of the genetic mutation diminished in 81 patients and vanished in 51.

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