

DENMARK**No Overall Risk of Breast Cancer with Induced Abortions**

Induced abortions have no overall effect on the risk of breast cancer, Danish researchers conclude from a population-based cohort of 1.5 million women.

Dr Mads Melbye at the Department of Epidemiology Research, Danish Epidemiology Science Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark, and colleagues identified 370 715 induced abortions among 280 965 women and 10 246 women with breast cancer [1].

Induced abortion was not associated with an increased risk of breast cancer overall, nor in subgroups defined according to age at abortion, parity, time since abortion, or age at diagnosis of breast cancer. However, the relative risk of breast cancer increased with gestational age of the fetus at the time of the most recent induced abortion: <7 weeks, 0.81 (95% CI=0.58–1.13; >12 weeks, 1.38 (95% CI=1.00–1.90). The researchers could not explain why a very early induced abortion was associated with a slight, although insignificant, decrease in risk.

The researchers comment, "Abortions induced at gestational ages of more than 12 weeks were performed primarily for medical or social reasons. The women who had such abortions could have had a relatively high risk of breast cancer, but we could not identify any medical condition associated with both a high risk and late induced abortion."

I. Melbye M, Wohlfahrt J, Olsen JH, *et al.* Induced abortion and the risk of breast cancer. *N Engl J Med* 1997, 336, 81–85.

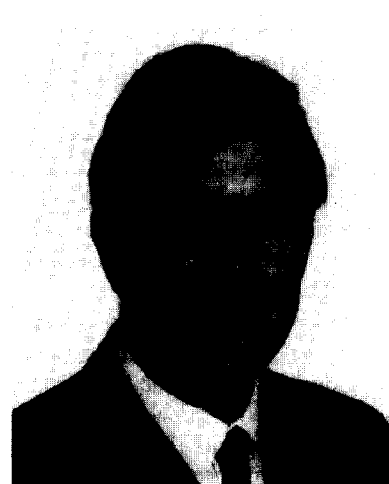
U.K.**ECF Treatment Doubles Survival Chances for Gastric Cancer Patients**

Chemotherapy with ECF, administered by a portable pump attached to the patient's waist, caused twice as many tumours to regress as the standard treatment, FAMTX, doctors at the Royal Marsden NHS Trust hospital have found [1].

The randomised trial involved 256 patients suffering from tumours too advanced to be surgically curable. The trial compared epirubicin, cisplatin and fluorouracil (ECF) with fluorouracil, doxorubicin and methotrexate (FAMTX).

This particular ambulatory infusional pump treatment was first developed at the Royal Marsden to treat gastric cancers and has since been used to treat breast and ovarian cancer, with promising results.

The ECF trial was run by Dr David Cunningham, head of the Royal Marsden's Gastrointestinal Unit and carried out at six major cancer centres throughout the U.K. as well as at the Royal Marsden. Commenting on the results, Dr Cunningham said: "These findings undoubtedly establish a new standard treatment for patients with inoperable gastric cancer. In addition, this treatment may have implications for patients with operable gastric cancer and the Medical Research Council has recently launched a national trial in patients who are diagnosed at a less advanced stage, to investigate using



David Cunningham

"These findings establish a new standard treatment for patients with inoperable gastric cancer."

ECF to shrink the tumour before surgery and hopefully improve cure rates."

I. Webb A, Cunningham D, Scarffe JH, *et al.* Randomized trial comparing epirubicin, cisplatin, and fluorouracil versus fluorouracil, doxorubicine, and methotrexate in advanced esophagogastric cancer. *J Clin Oncol* 1997, 15, 261–267.

NORWAY**Uterine Cervical Cancer Has Major Risk Factors in Common with the Smoking Cancers**

Uterine cervical cancer may have some major risk factor(s) in common with the cancers generally accepted as smoking-associated, according to a study of 500 000 cancer cases diagnosed in Norway during the period 1953–1993 [1].

Dr Anders Engeland at the

Cancer Registry of Norway, Oslo, Norway, and colleagues comment on their finding in the article: "This is in accordance with the literature, where an association between smoking and uterine cervical cancer has been found consistently. In addition, the results for

liver cancer and leukaemia indicated that these types of cancer also share some risk factor(s) with the smoking-associated cancers."

They used the occurrence of multiple primary cancers to indicate the possible associations between smoking