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at Southwestern Regional Medical Center

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News Release

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Cancer Treatment Centers of America Offers Breakthrough Melanoma Drug

FDA-Approved Yervoy™ Shown to Prolong the Lives of Patients with Melanoma

Tulsa, Okla., June 23, 2011 — [Cancer Treatment Centers of America](http://www.cancercenter.com) at Southwestern Regional Medical Center in Tulsa, Okla., is excited to offer a new treatment for melanoma that harnesses the power of a patient's own immune system to fight off the cancer.

Approved by the [Food and Drug Administration](http://www.fda.gov) on March 25, Yervoy is the first FDA-approved therapy for inoperable or metastatic melanoma in more than a decade. According to the distributor of the drug, CTCA is the first facility in Oklahoma to use Yervoy.

"We are pleased to offer this breakthrough treatment for one of the deadliest forms of cancer," said Steve Mackin, CTCA president and CEO of the Tulsa hospital. "At CTCA, we realize that time is precious when you or a loved one are fighting cancer. When an innovative treatment comes along, we do our best to bring this option to our patients quickly."

Metastatic melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer and occurs when cancer spreads beyond the surface of the skin to other organs. Melanoma is mostly curable when treated in its early stages. However, in its late stages, the average survival rate is just six months with a one-year mortality rate of 75 percent, making it one of the most aggressive forms of cancer.

(more)

Larry Gouchenhour, 37, of Reno, Nev., is currently treating with Yervoy at CTCA in Tulsa. Initially diagnosed with melanoma in 2002, he received various conventional treatments for recurring tumors before joining a clinical trial for the generic form of Yervoy at a California facility. When the trial ended, Gouchenhour underwent surgery at CTCA Tulsa and began treating with Yervoy at the suggestion of his medical oncologist, Dr. Simeon Jaggernauth.

One of an emerging class of treatments known as immunotherapy, Yervoy treats a patient's immune system rather than treating the tumor directly. The drug works by blocking a protein on the surface of the body's T cells that inhibits the cells' action, essentially disabling a brake on the immune system. Yervoy is administered in four 90-minute infusions over three months.

Yervoy is the first and only FDA-approved therapy to demonstrate a significant improvement in overall survival for patients with late-stage melanoma. Research studies from the drug's manufacturer, [Bristol-Meyers Squibb](#), found that patients using Yervoy had a median survival of 10 months compared to six months in the control group. The estimated survival rate for Yervoy patients at one year was 46 percent and was 25 percent at two years, compared to 24 percent at one year and 14 percent at two years in the non-Yervoy control group, however CTCA does not have enough results to date to confirm those from the manufacturer's study.

Gouchenhour said that the drug allows him to carry on with life and that he now looks forward to each CTCA visit to see how Yervoy is working. "The treatments are like 'nothing' [compared to previous treatments]. I feel very good."

The [American Cancer Society](#) reported about 68,000 new cases of melanoma in the United States in 2009 and 8,700 deaths. The number of new U.S. cases of melanoma has been increasing for the past 30 years.

About Cancer Treatment Centers of America®

Founded in 1988, Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) provides a comprehensive, patient-centered treatment model that fully integrates traditional, state-of-the-art medical treatments with scientifically supported complementary therapies such as nutrition, naturopathic medicine, psychological counseling, physical therapy and spiritual support to meet the special, whole-person needs of advanced stage cancer patients. With a network of cancer treatment hospitals and community oncology programs in Arizona, Illinois, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Washington, CTCA encourages patients and their families to participate in treatment decisions with its Patient Empowered Care® model. For more information about Cancer Treatment Centers of America, go to cancercenter.com.