

Cancer drug breakthrough

First to be discovered, developed in Singapore

A new cancer drug developed by Singapore researchers, which could offer hope to hundreds of patients suffering from a range of cancers — pancreatic, colon and stomach — has entered clinical trials here.

Developed by the Experimental Therapeutic Centre (ETC) and Drug Discovery and Development (D3) units at the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star), and Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, the drug homes in on proteins that cause excessive cell growth when they go rogue, leading to cancers.

These cancers are linked to a group of cell signalling pathways known as Wnt signalling, that have been identified to promote cancer growth, reported *The Straits Times Online*.

ETC-159, as the drug is now called, works

to inhibit these pathways, suppressing cancer proliferation and preventing cancer progression.

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It is being tested at the National Cancer Centre Singapore and the National University Hospital, and if successful, could emerge as the country's first cancer blockbuster.

Trial sites in the US will open as clinical trials progress.

The Phase 1 clinical trial will evaluate the safety and tolerability of ETC-159 in advanced solid tumours of up to 58 patients. The first patient was dosed on June 18.

It is the first publicly-funded drug candidate discovered and developed in Singapore to advance into first-in-human trials.

Overall, cancer is the leading cause of deaths in Singapore.