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Marine sponge drug extends breast cancer survival

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- [Oceanic Cornucopia](#)

A new agent derived from a marine sponge can extend the survival rates of women with locally recurrent or metastatic breast cancer who already received extensive standard therapy.



Credit: NOAA

U.S.News | [Drug Made From Sea Sponge Fights Advanced Breast Cancer](#) | 12-14-2011

The promising finding on the drug, known as eribulin, was presented Sunday at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in Chicago.

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These results potentially establish eribulin as a new and effective treatment for women with heavily pretreated breast cancer.

The synthetic component called eribulin mesylate mimics a component found naturally in sponges and can prevent cell division, which causes cells to self-destruct, said study authors.



PSA-007-Marine Sponge Cancer Survival-Worlds Oceans

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More than 750 women were randomized to receive either eribulin or a "treatment of physician's choice," the last because there isn't a standard treatment for this type of cancer, Leeds explained. In almost all cases, it was another chemotherapy.

The study included women who had already been treated extensively for their cancer, with the average patient already having undergone four chemotherapies.

The researchers report a 23 percent improvement in median survival when women took eribulin, with the median survival for those in the eribulin group at just over 13 months vs. 10.7 months in the treatment

Eribulin

(err-uh-BYOO-lin)

Trade/other name(s): Halaven, eribulin mesylate

Why would this drug be used?

This chemotherapy drug is used to treat advanced breast cancer. It is used when certain other chemotherapy medicines have not worked. It is also being studied for treating other types of cancer.

How does this drug work?

Eribulin belongs to a class of drugs called *microtubule inhibitors*. When cells divide (and multiply), structures called microtubules are needed to pull the chromosomes apart into the new cells. Eribulin stops the microtubules from forming so that the cells are stuck in the middle of dividing. When this happens, the cells die.

We have so much to gain from our oceans and so much to lose. There are avenues that anyone can take to make a difference.

Thank you

*Vic Ferguson
The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation
Executive Director
P.O. Box 311117
Houston, Texas 77231
vic.ferguson@wfcrc.org
www.wfcrc.org
281.886.7428 (office)
281.309.1201 (cell)*