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Singapore: Boehringer Ingelheim has achieved positive results from the trial of afatinib in comparison to erlotinib in patients with advanced squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) of the lung.

The trial demonstrated afitinib, which is yet not approved for use in patients with SCC of the lung, to be of higher efficacy as compared to erlotinib.

LUX-Lung 8 clinical trial investigator Professor Jean Charles Soria, head drug development department, Gustave Roussy Cancer Centre, Paris, France commented, "Squamous cell lung cancer is a difficult-to-treat disease with extensive comorbidities, and patients would benefit from more treatment options. The results of LUX-Lung 8 are very encouraging because they illustrate the clinical relevance of targeting ErbB receptors in this disease. International guidelines recognise erlotinib as a second-line treatment option for squamous cell carcinoma of the lung, and improved outcomes demonstrated with afatinib suggest this treatment could offer additional benefits for this patient population."

Dr Mehdi Shahidi, medical head, Solid Tumour Oncology, Boehringer Ingelheim commented, "Following the approval of afatinib in more than 50 countries for the treatment of specific types of EGFR mutation-positive lung cancer and positive overall survival data in patients with the most common EGFR mutation, we are proud to present another piece of evidence for afatinib showing it can prolong survival of patients with squamous cell lung cancer."

Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) is the most common form of lung cancer comprising over 85 percent of lung cancer cases. SCC, a type of lung cancer which develops in the cells lining the airways, represents approximately 30 percent of NSCLC cases.

LUX-Lung 8 was conducted across 23 countries and is the first prospective trial to compare two different tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs) in patients with advanced SCC of the lung.

"In the LUX Lung 8 trial, Afatinib showed superior response rate, disease control rate and overall survival benefit as compared to Erlotinib, a drug which is approved in this setting. There are few treatment options available for this group of patients, hence, it is encouraging to have a better treatment option available, especially for patients who are unfit for chemotherapy or patients who prefer oral treatment." said Dr Lim Hong Liang, senior consultant, medical oncology, Parkway Cancer Centre.

Afatinib is approved in more than 50 countries for the first-line treatment of distinct types of EGFR mutation-positive NSCLC.