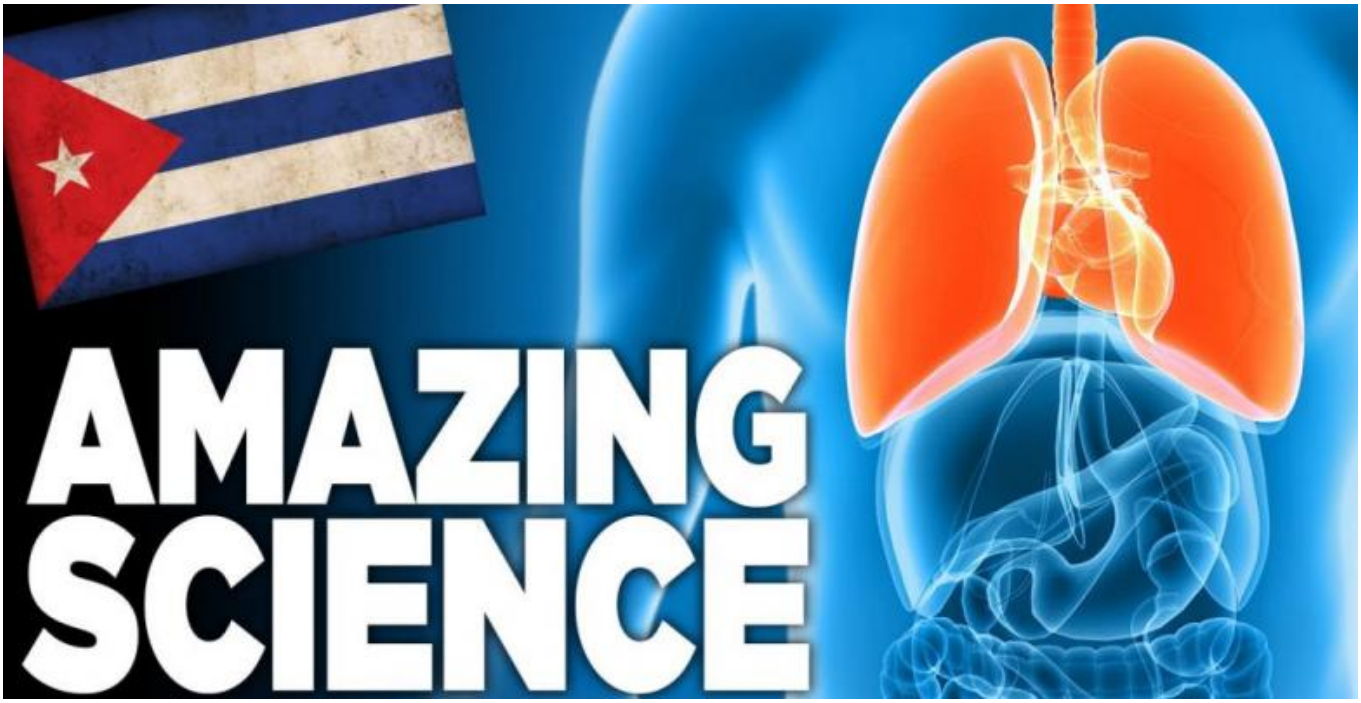
Cuba Lung Cancer Vaccine: Researchers develop world's first lung cancer vaccine

05/03/2018



Cuba has developed the world's first lung cancer vaccine, which is already making its way into other Latin American countries. And, it's the first Cuban patented drug being allowed to undergo clinical trials at a US cancer research institute. CGTN's Michael Voss has this report from Havana.

Caridad Gomez started smoking when she was 13. Four years ago, she was diagnosed with lung cancer. After undergoing intensive chemotherapy, she is now being treated with the world's first lung cancer vaccine. CimaVax- EGF is a Cuban developed drug aimed at preventing the recurrence of the disease. Gomez is now back at work and once a month, she returns to the hospital for a series of intramuscular injections.

CARDIDAD GOMEZ LUNG CANCER PATIENT "I feel good, I have even gained some weight. I've been using the vaccine for two years and four months now and so far I've felt really good."

Patients still have to complete a course of chemo or radio therapy before moving onto the vaccine. There are other lung cancer fighting drugs which work by attacking the cancer cells. What's different about the vaccine is that it helps the

body generate its own immune system in a way that starves the cancer and stops it from growing.

DR YOANNA FLORES ONCOLOGIST "It has revolutionized lung cancer treatment in our country. It's a new therapeutic weapon for treating the disease. Patients are responding well and surviving for longer than those not being treated with it."

Early results were so positive that in 2016, the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in the United States persuaded the U.S. government to allow it to test the vaccine. The first time a Cuban produced drug is undergoing clinical trials in the U.S. The vaccine is just one of an impressive array of cancer drugs developed at Cuba's Center for Molecular Immunology.

MICHAEL VOSS HAVANA, CUBA "This research center has been working on cancer treatments for more than 20 years. It already has drugs to help with pancreatic cancer and brain tumors. Lung cancer is its first vaccine. Now it's working on one for prostate cancer."

It was Cuba's former leader Fidel Castro who decided to concentrate on developing a world-class biotechnology sector and it's been well-funded ever since. If the clinical trials now underway in the United States are successful, pharmaceuticals could prove an important new income source for the Cuban economy. Michael Voss CGTN Havana.