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AstraZeneca, Merck hope for expansion of Lynparza use

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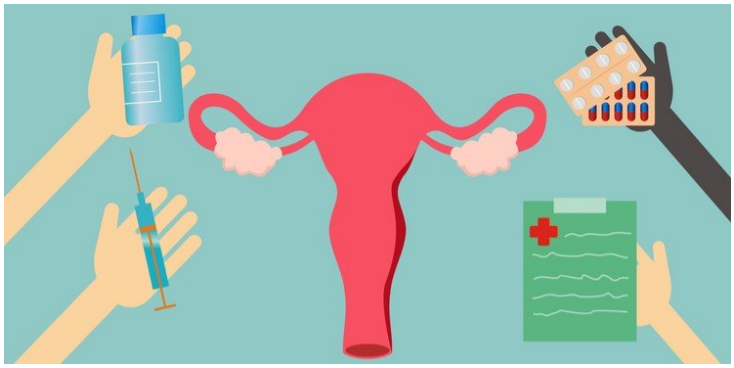
AstraZeneca and partner Merck & Co are to apply for an expanded use for their ovarian cancer drug Lynparza, after phase 3 trial data supported its use in patients with early-stage disease



AstraZeneca's oncology business received a boost recently as results of a clinical trial showed its drug Lynparza helped women with ovarian cancer live longer without their disease worsening when given as a first-line treatment.

Lynparza was the first poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase (PARP) class drug approved and is one of AstraZeneca's fastest growing sales prospects.

The result should pave the way for expanded use of the medicine, which is being developed and marketed with Merck & Co under a deal struck last year.

Lynparza is already approved for later use in patients with so-called BRCA genetic mutations. Its success in first-line therapy could expand the number of women with newly diagnosed ovarian cancer who are suitable for the drug by 30-50 percent, AstraZeneca believes.

Based on the strong results seen in the latest Phase III study, known as SOLO-1, AstraZeneca and Merck said they would talk to regulators about approving the earlier use of the medicine in women with BRCA mutations, which can drive tumour growth.

"It is the first time that we see a significant and clinically impactful improvement in progression-free survival in the first-line maintenance setting for women with BRCA-mutated ovarian cancer treated with a PARP inhibitor," said Sean Bohen, chief medical officer at AstraZeneca.

A spokeswoman said AstraZeneca viewed competitors as 18 months behind in generating similar clinical data.