

GLOBE healthreport

WONDER DRUG BEATS DEADLY SKIN CANCER!

A GROUNDBREAKING new drug promises to boost the survival rate of victims of the deadliest skin cancer – melanoma – by a whopping 67 percent!

The experimental medicine, ipilimumab, works by strengthening the body's immune system, bolstering its ability to battle deadly skin tumors.

It's the first treatment shown to add years to the lives of patients.

"We have not had any therapy that has prolonged survival until now," declares Dr. Lynn Schuchter of the University of Pennsylvania's Abramson Cancer Center.

Triggered by the sun's ultraviolet rays, melanoma claims 8,650 lives a year in the United States alone.

Actress Doris Day's son Terry Melcher, 62, was killed by the skin cancer in 2004. Maureen Reagan, daughter of the late President Ronald Reagan, died from the disease in 2001. She was just 60.

Melanoma patients are living longer

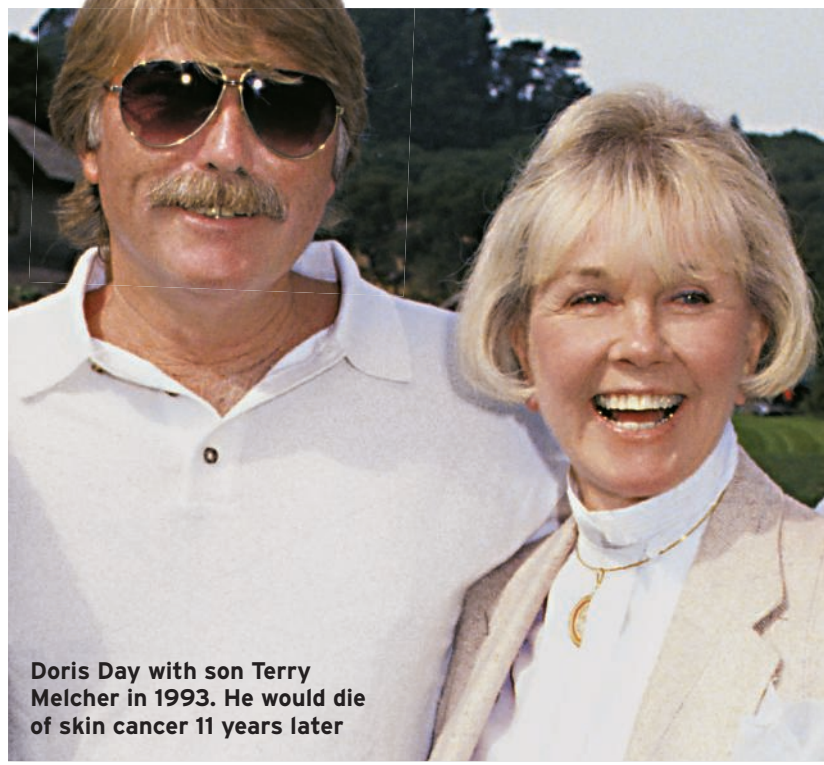
- STUDY SHOWS

Former Republican presidential hopeful John McCain, 73, was treated for melanoma 10 years ago as doctors removed cancerous tissue on his left temple along with lymph nodes from his neck to keep the cancer from spreading.

When detected early, the five year survival rate is 99 percent – but once melanoma has spread, the survival rate is a chilling 10 percent.

And the number of melanoma victims is skyrocketing, which makes a groundbreaking new treatment like ipilimumab a true lifesaver.

In a study, the average survival of



Doris Day with son Terry Melcher in 1993. He would die of skin cancer 11 years later

patients treated with the drug, combined with a vaccine to stimulate the immune system, was 10 months compared to just six months for patients only given the vaccine.

That's a staggering 67 percent improvement in survival!

However, the drug also showed serious side effects. Researchers linked 14 deaths in the trials to ipilimumab.

Still, the drug's performance in clinical tests was so stunning the

U.S. Food and Drug Administration pledged to give the Bristol-Myers medication swift approval.

Experts expect it to be on the market by the end of this year.

Palm Beach, Fla., dermatologist Dr. Ken Beer heralded the drug as "promising," but added that the best prevention of melanoma is "avoiding UV rays from either sun exposure or tanning beds."

- LYNN ALLISON
lynnallison@globefl.com

Update

Sugar drinks hike blood pressure

+HERE's one easy way to lower blood pressure - stop drinking so many sodas and other sugar-laden drinks! Researchers at Louisiana State University note that cutting out just one sugary beverage a day can knock up to 18 points off your blood pressure over the course of a few months. And if you reduce your soft drink consumption by more than one a day, your blood pressure is likely to drop even more.

Animal protein sparks IBD in gals

+WOMEN who suffer from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) should eat less meat and other animal protein, suggests a new study. Participants who ate the most protein had more than three times the risk of developing IBD, which is a collective term for digestive ailments including colitis and Crohn's disease. Eating meat and fish seemed to increase the risk more than dairy products and eggs. Experts believe animal protein causes distress because it creates toxic by-products.

Avoiding gluten can make you fat

+GLUTEN-FREE diets are all the rage these days - but experts warn they can actually make you gain weight! One problem is that products containing no gluten - a protein found in wheat, rye and barley - often have extra sugar and fat to make them taste better. Nutrition expert Dr. Emma Williams says cutting out gluten "is a waste of time" that can cause "your attempts to lose weight and get healthier to backfire."