

## *Chemotherapy unjustified at times, says study*

SAN FRANCISCO—About one third of patients with late stage cancerous tumors derive no benefit from chemotherapy treatments, a US study published Saturday indicated.

"While use of the chemotherapy in responsive cancers is understandable and may shrink the tumor and offer palliation, providing chemotherapy to patients with unresponsive cancers is hard to justify," said the study's lead author Ezekiel Emanuel, an oncologist and bioethicist at the National Institutes of Health.

The researchers studied nearly 8,000 cancer-related deaths in Massachusetts and discovered that responsive and unresponsive cancers were treated with virtually identical chemotherapy regimens, suggesting an "overuse" of the difficult and exhausting treatment.

"Providing chemotherapy at the same rate to tumors that are not chemotherapy-responsive as to those that are chemotherapy-responsive strongly suggests overuse of chemotherapy at the end of life," Emanuel said in a statement issued from the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology here.

The reasons justifying the use of chemotherapy even for non-responsive cancers were not quantifiable, the researchers admitted. But that fact did not mitigate their calls for "reconsideration of the use of chemotherapy at the end of life by the oncology community."

AFP