

### What is already known on this topic

Randomised trials comparing palliative chemotherapy with supportive care in patients with advanced colorectal cancer have mostly been underpowered or have not assessed all important outcomes of treatment

Many different treatment regimens are used, the benefits of which are unclear

### What this study adds

Meta-analysis shows that chemotherapy prolongs the time to disease progression and overall survival in patients with advanced colorectal cancer

Data on the effect of chemotherapy on quality of life are inadequate to draw firm conclusions about the palliative benefit of chemotherapy

during and after the completion of treatment. Future trials should not impose upper age limits, and stratification of patients by age at trial entry should be considered to determine whether treatment outcomes vary in different age groups.

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