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Green tea extract helps fight cancer, researchers find

Posted Feb. 16, 2005
Courtesy the University of California at Los Angeles and World Science staff

Green tea extract may help fight bladder cancer by snarling up tiny "skeletons" within cells, which cancer cells use to move around, according to researchers.

The findings appear in a study published in the Feb. 15 issue of the scientific journal *Clinical Cancer Research*.

The researchers who conducted the study, from the University of California at Los Angeles, examined how the substance affected bladder cancer cells in laboratory tests. Their results were consistent with suggestions from previous studies that the extract fights several cancers, and showed how it might do so, said the university's JianYu Rao, the study's senior author.

It found the extract targets cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone, the researchers said.

"Our study adds a new dimension in understanding the mechanisms of green tea extract," Rao said. "If we knew exactly how it works to inhibit the development of cancer, we could figure out more precisely which bladder cancer patients might benefit from taking it."

Previous studies had suggested the extract might work by killing cancer cells and hampering the development of a blood supply that feeds them.

The UCLA scientists said they showed that green tea extract affects a process, called actin remodeling, in which cells' internal "skeleton" changes its shape. This rearrangement, not unlike the movements of our own skeletons, allows the cancer cells to move, and thus migrate out of the bladder to invade new areas of the body.

"The green tea extract may keep the cancer cells confined and localized, where they are easier to treat and the prognosis is better," Rao said. "Cancer cells are invasive and green tea extract interrupts the invasive process of the cancer."

The green tea extract influenced this remodeling by making cells stick together, preventing the skeletons from moving around very much, the researchers said.

The extract also had a second effect, they found: it changed the cells into slightly different types of cells.

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