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HEALTH NEWS



Chocolate Ingredient May Stop Cancer Cell Division

Contributed by Lisa Olen | 18 April, 2005 20:39 GMT

Chocolate has an ingredient that seems to exert anti-cancer properties, according to new research findings that may one day contribute to the design of novel cancer treatments. The study, carried out by researchers from the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University, is published in the April issue of the journal [Molecular Cancer Therapeutics](#).

Pentameric procyanidin (pentamer), a natural compound found in cocoa, deactivates a number of proteins that likely work in concert to push a cancer cell to continually divide, the authors explain.

"There are all kinds of chemicals in the food we eat that potentially have effects on cancer cells, and a natural compound in chocolate may be one," says the lead author, Robert B. Dickson, Ph.D., professor of oncology. "We need to slowly develop evidence about the selectivity of these compounds to cancer, learn how they work, and sort out any issues of toxicity."

Flavonoids Offer Protection from Free Radicals

Chocolate, like many other foods, is the source of many possible anti-cancer compounds, but Dickson stresses that this research, which is part of a series of studies conducted at Georgetown on the chocolate-cancer connection, does not mean that people who eat chocolate will reduce their cancer risks or treat a current case.

Although the study was conducted in breast-cancer cell cultures, the finding potentially could apply to other cancers, Dickson said.

Chocolate is made from the beans of the cacao tree, one of the plants that is rich in natural antioxidants known as flavonoids. These antioxidants may protect cells from the damage caused by unstable molecules called free radicals, which are thought to contribute to both heart disease and cancer development.