

Adelaide study: Turmeric shown to be effective in fighting cancer tumours

May 9, 2015 10:15am
BRAD CROUCHThe Advertiser



Associate Professor Sonja Klebe with a sample of turmeric. Picture: CALUM ROBERTSON

A WORLD-FIRST study by researchers at Flinders Medical Centre has pinpointed the spice turmeric as a vital ingredient in the fight against deadly mesothelioma.

The Flinders' team has used the peppery spice to slow the growth of mesothelioma tumours in human patients' cells.

Its active ingredient curcumin has anti-inflammatory properties and research has indicated some anti-carcinogenic properties.

Researchers at Flinders have been checking whether this can be used alone or in conjunction with standard therapies to treat malignant mesothelioma, an aggressive cancer caused by the inhalation of asbestos.

Malignant mesothelioma is a tumour of the thin membranes that surround the lungs, heart and abdominal internal organs. Currently there is no effective treatment for the cancer.

Lead researcher associate professor Sonja Klebe, from the Department of Anatomical Pathology at Flinders Medical Centre said average survival after diagnosis of malignant mesothelioma was less than a year, and current therapies to treat the cancer could make patients ill.

“Standard chemotherapy shows only limited success, and radical surgery is only available to few patients, and success is not guaranteed,” Professor Klebe said.

“Previous research has been successful in inhibiting the growth of mesothelioma tumour cells in animal model cells in a laboratory setting using curcumin, and recently we have been able to repeat that success — but with the use of patients’ cells,” she said.

“Importantly, this breakthrough allows us to predict if a certain patient is likely to benefit from therapy.

“In addition, we also found that curcumin may affect blood supply to the tumour, and we know that adequate blood supply is essential to maintain tumour growth.”

The work was done on fluid drained from patients’ chests which is normally discarded as medical waste.

The work indicates curcumin could be taken orally in strong doses or applied directly to an open chest during surgery.

“Curcumin has virtually no side effects, and could be used alone in patients too unwell to tolerate other therapies, or in conjunction with other drugs,” Prof Klebe said.

“It may improve treatment response and allow reduction of standard drugs, improving quality of life. It’s very exciting research.”

Prof Klebe noted turmeric has been used in India where it originates for centuries as a health product and said it is likely to have applications for other cancers.

“We’ve seen a very dramatic response to it, and it appears it can be tailored for individual patients,” she said.

“It is not going to cure cancer but it likely to make people live longer and more comfortable lives.

“It is known as a health product — I’ve actually been taking it myself since I started this study.”

Source Web:

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/adelaide-study-turmeric-shown-to-be-effective-in-fighting-cancer-tumours/news-story/5330b54c093d893a4ec86aeb206d4af6>