



Anti-inflammatory medications may have anti-cancer effect

Mayo Clinic Cancer Center has begun three clinical studies looking at the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to prevent cancer — colon, esophageal or lung. These studies are part of the ongoing cancer center chemoprevention program, using medications to prevent cancer, especially for people with increased cancer risk.

“While searching for the cure is important, even more so is finding effective ways to prevent cancer,” says Paul Limburg, M.D., Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist and lead researcher on the colon cancer prevention study. “We have observed that some of the same biological processes that cause inflammation may also be involved in developing cancer, so the next step was to see if drugs that prevent inflammation also serve to lessen the risk of cancer.”

The colon cancer study is looking at

the NSAID sulindac (Clinoril), and its ability to inhibit inflammation and subsequent transformation of damaged cells into cancer cells. Sulindac’s preventive effect will be measured against that of two other potential prevention agents: atorvastatin (Lipitor), a cholesterol-lowering drug with some reported cancer prevention aspects, and raftilose (Synergy1), a food supplement derived from chicory, also with some supporting research conducted overseas.

Dr. Limburg’s team will treat patients at increased risk for developing colon cancer, specifically individuals age 40 or older who have advanced colorectal adenoma (precancerous tissues) or a history of colon cancer with treatment completed more than one year prior to entering the study.

Other gastroenterologists at Mayo are looking at NSAID use for patients

with Barrett’s esophagus. “There is evidence to support the idea that taking an NSAID will slow or reverse precancerous conditions such as Barrett’s esophagus,” Dr. Limburg says. “The prognosis for esophageal cancer patients is poor. We are continually looking for ways to prevent this and other cancers from ever starting, and NSAIDs provide a promising avenue for our research.”

These research studies are assisted in part by Astra-Zeneca, Bayer, Boston Scientific, Fujinon, Olympus and Orafiti Inc. ■

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lead researcher
on the colon cancer
prevention
study*

