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Cure on the horizon for prostate cancer?

A human vaccine for prostate cancer has been successfully used in lab mice to cure the disease, prompting some to suggest a cure for men suffering from prostate cancer is on the horizon.

A report published in the journal Nature Medicine states that researchers in the United Kingdom and those at the Mayo Clinic in the United States created a therapy that cured prostate cancer in mice with no apparent side effects. The treatment works in much the same way that other vaccinations work for various diseases.

The researchers assembled DNA libraries that included healthy prostate DNA and put them in virus shells, the protective protein shells that surround many known viruses. These substances were then injected into the infected mice. The treatment tricks the immune system into producing antibodies specific to fight the particular cancer. The mice were cured.

This may shed promising light on not only prostate cancer treatment, but treatments for many different types of cancer. Using these vaccines may negate the reliance on radiation and chemotherapy to shrink tumors, and instead look solely toward the body's own powerful immune system.

Although the mice were cured, human trials are still at least two years away, according to researchers. It is still unknown whether the treatment will be effective in humans, but many researchers remain optimistic.

ABOUT PROSTATE CANCER

Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among North American men. The American Cancer Society estimates that around 200,000 new cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed each year. In 2010, roughly 30,000 men died of prostate cancer in the U.S.

Prostate cancer forms in a gland that only men have, which is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. The role of the prostate is to first produce and then store a transparent liquid that is a vital component of seminal fluid or semen.

In healthy men, the prostate is the size of a walnut and can be felt during a routine examination. In many older men, the prostate enlarges due to inflammation, called prostatitis. If it enlarges too much it can restrict urine flow and cause reproductive problems.

Prostate cancer is routinely found in older men. Regular rectal examinations by a physician can help determine if prostate cancer may be present. A blood test called Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is also effective. PSA is low in normal prostates. Raised test results could be indicative of disease in the prostate. Although it can't definitively test for cancer, it can alert a doctor that there is a problem that requires further investigation.



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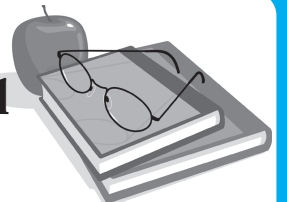
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