Novel Cancer Drug Shows Promise

Geron Corporation announced recently that its experimental anti-cancer drug, currently dubbed GRN163L, has exhibited good tolerability in Phase I/II trials in patients suffering from chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL).* Although far from reaching the market, the drug has demonstrated good tolerability and the ability to reach desirable concentrations in patients' bloodstreams in a predictable, linear manner. These properties simplify dosing and reduce the chance of overdose, should the drug gain eventual FDA approval.

The drug is the world's first to target telomerase that has reached the clinical trial stage. Telomerase is an enzyme enlisted by many tumors and cancer cells to fuel runaway growth. According to Geron, it appears to be "unique in its observed effects on tumor stem cells." Such cells are rare, chemotherapy-resistant cells responsible for cancer recurrence. Future trials will focus on treating multiple myeloma and non-small cell lung carcinoma.

—Dale Kiefer


Low Vitamin D Levels May Increase Cardiovascular Risk

Low blood levels of vitamin D are linked with increased cardiovascular risk factors in American adults, according to a recent study.*

Scientists measured serum levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in more than 15,000 men and women aged 20 years and older. Those with the lowest vitamin D levels had a significantly higher prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, and elevated serum triglyceride levels—all of which increase cardiovascular disease risk. Low vitamin D levels were found in women, the elderly, and obese individuals.

These study findings suggest that low serum vitamin D could represent a novel cardiovascular risk factor, and that current recommendations for vitamin D intake may be far too low for optimal health. Prospective studies are needed to assess vitamin D's effects on various cardiovascular risk factors.

—Cathy Burke


Cinnamon Prevents Blood Sugar Spikes

Cinnamon helps diminish the blood glucose spike that typically follows a meal, in part by delaying stomach emptying, according to new research from Sweden.¹ Scientists have previously reported that cinnamon lowers fasting blood sugar, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), and total cholesterol in patients with type 2 diabetes.

The Swedish study examined the effects of 6 g of cinnamon added to approximately 10 ounces of rice pudding consumed by 14 non-diabetic subjects. "The addition of cinnamon to the rice pudding significantly delayed gastric emptying and lowered the [after-meal] glucose response," wrote the researchers.

Cinnamon's water-soluble polyphenols may be responsible for its beneficial metabolic effects.²

—Dale Kiefer


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