

WA researchers a step closer to anti-cancer medications

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Homegrown medical researchers are a step closer to developing new anti-cancer medications that could activate a gene to block the growth of cancerous cells.

Led by WA Institute for Medical Research director Professor Peter Klinken, the group of scientists has screened a large collection of drug-like molecules.

The HIs5 tumour suppressor gene was reported by Professor Klinken's team four years ago.

A number of compounds which can increase levels of the gene have been identified recently.

"This discovery is very encouraging and a great step forward in our quest to create new cancer treatments," Professor Klinken said.

"Because of the role HIs5 plays in keeping cell growth at a normal rate, we expect that these compounds will greatly slow down the growth of cancers cells."

Research has revealed people who do not have the gene, or those who have a mutated or inactive form of the gene, are more likely to develop certain types of cancer.

WAIMR has spent more than a year screening 70,000 compounds which increase levels of the gene, which slow down the growth of cancer cells in humans.

"Our preliminary data reveals that several of these compounds do indeed markedly slow down the growth of human cancer cells," Professor Klinken said.

"Importantly, we also know through computer modelling that nearly all of these compounds have drug-like qualities.

"From here, we take the research to the next phase of laboratory testing, with the ultimate hope of investigating if one of these molecules can be used to create a fresh treatment that can slow growth of cancer cells in patients."

This story was found at: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/wa-researchers-a-step-closer-to-anticancer-medications-20080827-43q9.html>