

New Drugs To Fight Colon And Breast Cancer More Effectively

The doctoral thesis Potencial terapéutico de nuevos fármacos antitumorales. Estudio sobre líneas celulares epiteliales (Therapeutic Potential of New Antitumor Drugs. A Study on Epithelial Cell Lines) has made it possible to develop six new drugs to fight **colon and breast cancer** more effectively than other drugs currently used do.

The study was conducted at the Department of Human Anatomy and Embryology at the University of Granada by Octavio Caba Pérez, member of research group Avances en Biomedicina (Progress in Biomedicine), under the direction of professors Antonia Aránega, Juan Antonio Marchal and Fernando Rodríguez.

The importance of this study, in which researchers from the Department of Pharmaceutical and Organic Chemistry have also collaborated, is that it has made it possible to determine a total of six antitumor compounds similar to 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), which is one of the most widely-used drugs nowadays to fight colon and breast cancer. These compounds are more effective against malignant cells (those which are cancerous) and less toxic against benign cells (those which are unnecessarily destroyed or harmed with treatments such as chemotherapy).

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As Caba Pérez points out, the current method used to fight tumors “produces several collateral damages. A drug can be very effective against breast cancer, but it can also affect the rest of the benign epithelial tissue. As everybody knows, current treatments for cancer destroy a large number of unaffected cells in addition to affected cells,” says Caba Pérez.

This study has analyzed more than 100 drugs aimed at reducing the toxicity of the 5-FU against the benign cells, thus avoiding the reproduction of new carcinomas or other side effects. “We discarded compounds until we finally found six which have shown to be better than drugs currently used,” says Caba Pérez.

Research on cell lines

So far, the study has been conducted on cell lines, and not on patients, using a new technique called “Microarrays” or “DNA Chips”, which enable the identification of the effects produced by drugs on each gene—the lowest and most specific level that Medicine can deal with.

“Our research,” says Caba Pérez, “has been conducted with absolute precision with the aim of obtaining the lowest possible concentration of a drug producing the most significant effect on cancerous cells”. Therefore, this study has shown the importance of the presence of some toxic compounds like chlorine, fluorine, or uracil in the drug. This presence is one of the variables used to develop new antitumor drugs.

Part of the results of this study (which has been possible thanks to a collaboration agreement between the Office for the Transference of Research Results of the University of Granada and the company VILPOM) have been published in the January 1 issue of the international journal Tetrahedron. The remainder of the results will be published in various international journals on Biomedicine.-Universidad de Granada

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