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News

Cancer trial drug could treat asthma

A drug being tested to treat cancer could also help patients suffering from asthma, research has suggested.

Scientists found that the drug - R-Roscovotine - helps to kill certain immune cells which can exacerbate symptoms associated with asthma.

The findings could lead to an alternative way to treat asthma in patients who are resistant to steroids, which are commonly used in asthma treatments.

Immune cells

University researchers studied the effect that the drug had on immune cells known as eosinophils.

Eosinophils, found in the lungs and airways, help the body fight off parasitic infection.

However, too many uncontrolled eosinophils can damage other cells that line the lung, contributing to inflammatory conditions such as asthma.

Cell death

Researchers found that use of the drug caused the eosinophil cells to undergo a form of cell death known as apoptosis.

This is a natural process where unwanted cells are removed from the body.

The research has been published in the journal FEBS Letters.

We know that current asthma treatments, including steroids, work in part by reducing the number of eosinophils in the body and this is a promising avenue for developing new, effective treatments for a condition which affects over five million people in the UK.

Leanne Metcalf

Director of Research at Asthma UK

It may well be that use of a drug, such as R-Roscovotine, or one that works in a similar same way, could offer an alternative to steroids, or be used in conjunction with steroid treatment for asthma patients.

Professor Adriano Rossi

Centre for Inflammation Research

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