Anti-cancer gene: not what it was thought

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U.S. scientists say a gene thought to be essential in helping chemotherapy kill cancer cells, might actually help them thrive.

In a study of chemo patients, scientists at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Ovarian Cancer Institute found 70 percent of people whose tumors had mutations in the gene p53 were still alive after five years. Patients with normal p53 displayed only a 30 percent survival rate.

The scientists said those findings raise the possibility of a new strategy for fighting cancer -- namely, developing drugs to disable the functioning of that gene in the tumors of patients undergoing chemotherapy.

The study's results appear in the May 16 edition of the journal PLoS ONE.

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