

Study finds link between metals and cancer

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Researchers studying the effects of arsenic and tungsten on pregnant mice may have found a clue to the development of leukemia in 17 children in Fallon, Nev.

Mark L. Witten -- a University of Arizona research professor of pediatrics and study co-author -- said the mouse "pups" exhibited the gene changes associated with leukemia and brain cancer, but it's unknown whether the mice eventually would have developed either or both diseases, the Reno Gazette reported.

Previous testing has shown Fallon has large amounts of tungsten and arsenic in its groundwater and tungsten particles in its air. The town's new treatment plant has filtered arsenic from the municipal water supply since 2004.

Tungsten is naturally occurring in Nevada, so scientists couldn't tell if the source of the metal in Fallon was natural or industrial.

The pattern of airborne tungsten and cobalt in the town suggests a single source for the two metals, with the "hard metals plant" -- the Kennametal manufacturing plant in Fallon -- a likely source.

"It's obvious to my mind that there's a lot more study that has to be done," said Gary Peterson, the Kennametal plant manager. "We need to learn, we need to go forward but we also need people to understand that it's a good place to live."

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