

Cancer battle examines natural immunity

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Mice that are naturally immune to cancer produce white blood cells that cured and gave lifelong immunity to other mice, a Wake Forest University study says.

"This is a truly remarkable phenomenon," researcher Zhen Cui told The Los Angeles Times. "It really needs confirmation from other institutions."

Cui said confirmation of the "clear-cut" results is possible now that enough of the naturally cancer-immune rodents have been bred.

He and colleagues, reporting in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, said they believe the resistance discovered accidentally in 1999 results from the mutation of a gene they have yet to identify.

The added challenge, researchers say, is that the gene may occur on different chromosomes in different families of mice.

Reacting to the study, Howard Young of the National Cancer Institute said the idea of using white blood cells to kill cancer cells "is very exciting."

"But this is a mouse, and there is no guarantee that the same gene will exist in people," Young told the newspaper.

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