

Gene's cancer role is identified

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U.S. medical researchers say they've discovered a new cancer-promoting role for a gene potentially linked with breast, liver and other kinds of cancer.

The scientists at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital say their discovery that the gene YAP can transform mammary epithelial cells opens the door to understanding how a novel cell growth controlling pathway first discovered in fruit flies might be important in human cancers.

"We screened the DNA from breast cancer cells for amplifications that are associated with tumor development," said senior author Dr. Daniel Haber, a professor of medicine and director of the MGH Cancer Center. "The identification of these new potential cancer-causing genes is critical to uncovering novel pathways that drive the conversion of a normal cell to a cancerous one.

The research was conducted jointly by Haber and Joan Brugge, a biology professor at HMS.

The findings appear in the online early edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and will appear in the Aug. 15 print edition.

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