

Discovery could lead to new leukaemia treatments

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Deakin University scientists have identified a protein that could hold the key to new leukaemia treatments.

The protein--Stat5--was investigated at a laboratory at Deakin's Melbourne Campus at Burwood, as part of a multicentre international collaboration.

Leukaemia is a cancer caused by a proliferation of white blood cells. To understand and help prevent the disease, the Deakin researchers are looking for the responsible genes.

Head of the Deakin team, Associate Professor Alister Ward, said the discovery of how the protein acts provides a breakthrough in understanding the onset of leukaemia.

"We have found that Stat5 is responsible for making white blood cells overgrow in a particular disease setting that often precedes leukaemia," Associate Professor Ward explained.

"On top of this, we have also found that Stat5, when activated, is sufficient on its own to cause white blood cells to overgrow inside a whole organism.

"Together, these findings identify Stat5 as a major player in the process of leukaemia progression and is therefore a worthwhile target for intervention."

Associate Professor Ward said the next step in this research was to utilise the model systems established to develop new therapeutics.

Source: Research Australia

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