

Scientists report thyroid cancer discovery

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Canadian scientists say the discovery of a mutated protein in cells linked with thyroid cancer may lead to the development of drugs to fight such cancers.

"We now know why this gene causes these tumors and can start looking at how best to target the mutant proteins so that the cells expressing them can be killed or stopped from growing," said Queens University pathology and molecular medicine Professor Lois Mulligan, senior author of the study.

She and graduate student Taranjit Gujral developed three-dimensional models of the mutated RET protein implicated in a condition causing cancerous thyroid tumors. The model allowed them to predict and compare the protein's molecular actions and to see that the protein was 10 times more active than normal in cells associated with Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia 2B syndrome, an inherited cancer syndrome.

Vinay Singh and Zongchao Jia of the university's biochemistry department were co-authors of the study that appears in the journal *Cancer Research*.

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