

North American researchers eye ALS vaccine

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Researchers from U.S. and Canadian universities said they are working on a vaccine for treating the degenerative condition known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The researchers are developing a vaccine that would target a toxic protein in people with the genetic mutation -- found in a small percentage of cases of the neuro-muscular disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the Montreal Gazette reported Friday.

"The particular protein that has been the subject of much discussion is one that is made in every cell of the body in very high quantities," Harvard University neuro-scientist Robert Brown said at the Montreal Neurological Institute, which is conducting a symposium this week on ALS.

In people with the genetic mutation, the protein becomes toxic, changing in a way that causes it to become unstable, "probably impairing many, many aspects of the motor neurons that will die," he said.

Brown and researchers from Universite Laval in Quebec City are conducting more research on the Canadians' work that showed such a vaccine targeting the toxic protein was effective in lab mice genetically bred with ALS.

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