

# Research could treat infant tumours

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Research by Victoria University PhD graduate Anasuya Vishvanath into infantile haemangioma, or strawberry birthmarks, suggests that stem cells play an important role in the growth of these common infant tumours.

These could be used to more effectively treat strawberry birthmarks in future.

"Haemangioma are benign tumours that are caused by the abnormal growth of blood vessels. They grow rapidly for the first year of life and are then gradually replaced with [fatty tissue](#) over the next five to seven years," says Ms Vishvanath.

Her research identified key genes that are critical in the growth of the haemangioma and the isolated stem cells from the lesions. She was able to use these stem cells to grow into bone and [fat cells](#).

"This allowed me to develop a model using [stem cells](#) that better explains the natural progression of these benign tumours."

Using tissue biopsies grown in cell culture, Ms Vishvanath identified a potential new treatment option that may inhibit stem cell growth and so reduce the development of tumours.

Infantile haemangioma are the most common infant tumours, affecting up to 12 percent of Caucasians but less common in other races.

"Girls are also three times more affected than boys," says Ms Vishvanath.

Currently a second-year medical student at Auckland University, Ms Vishvanath is hoping to put her PhD research to use when she specialises in either paediatrics or radiology.

Ms Vishvanath immigrated to New Zealand from India five years ago. She completed her Bachelor degree in biochemical genetics at the UK's Sheffield University and spent six months working in a cancer research centre in Tampa, Florida before starting her PhD studies at Victoria University.

Source: Victoria University

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