

Researchers test benefit of fish oil in bowel cancer spread

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(Medical Xpress) -- Researchers from the University of Leeds will carry out a series of experiments to see whether fish oil can prevent or treat the spread of bowel cancer to the liver.

The cancer scientists will test the effectiveness of pure [Eicosapentaenoic Acid](#) (EPA) - a naturally occurring omega-3 fish oil component which is widely available in mixed fish oil preparations in health stores and supermarkets nationwide.

Gastroenterologist Professor Mark Hull, based at the Leeds Institute of [Molecular Medicine](#), University of Leeds, will use results from the initial experiments to design a future clinical trial to test the effect of pure EPA in humans at risk of or with metastatic [bowel cancer](#).

The research is being funded by Yorkshire [Cancer Research](#) and it will hopefully back up existing evidence from a previous clinical trial from Leeds that showed that EPA may prevent large [bowel polyps](#), the benign precursors of large bowel cancer.

"We and others have already demonstrated that EPA might have beneficial effects at a later stage after development of malignancy," said Professor Hull.

"These new tests will help us establish whether EPA can prevent the spread of large bowel cancer to the liver, the commonest site of spread and eventual cancer-related death which we call metastasis.

"The tests will also help us establish how EPA reduces growth of established [liver metastases](#) in an experimental system prior to design of the clinical trial."

The trial published last year, which involved 55 patients with the rare inherited condition Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP) thought to be responsible for about one in every 100 bowel cancers, saw a significant reduction in the size and number of pre-cancerous growths, known as polyps, in those patients who took a two gram daily dose of EPA in the free fatty acid form over a six month period.

Another promising study currently being led by the Leeds team involving nearly a 1000 patients, is investigating whether taking EPA alone, or together with aspirin, can help stop pre-cancerous growths from developing in the bowel.

Provided by University of Leeds

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