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DISCOVERIES

Ingredient in curry appears to ward off skin cancer

July 11, 2005

CANCER

STUDY'S PURPOSE: To see if curcumin, the ingredient that gives curry seasoning its distinctive yellow color, could destroy malignant cells that cause melanoma, a deadly skin cancer. Countries where curry is a regular part of the diet have a lower incidence of many cancers, especially skin cancer.

FINDINGS: Scientists at the University of Texas' MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston treated human melanoma cells grown in the lab with curcumin, and found that the survival of the cancer cells declined as the dose of curcumin was increased. "A master switch that causes tumor cell proliferation is turned off because of the ingredient," said Bharat Aggarwal, one of the researchers and professor of cancer medicine at the University of Texas.

BOTTOM LINE: "Curry is good for you," Aggarwal said. However, using sunscreen and avoiding excessive exposure to the sun or tanning beds, is still the best protection against melanoma, he said.

CAUTIONS: Tests of cells in labs don't necessarily predict what will happen when tried in people.

WHAT'S NEXT: Researchers want to test curcumin's ability to suppress melanoma cell growth in people.

WHERE TO FIND THE STUDY: *Cancer*, the journal of the American Cancer Society, Aug. 15, 2005.

KADESHA M. THOMAS

NUTRITION

Are lab-grown burgers in your future?**STUDY'S PURPOSE:** From mad cow disease to E. coli contamination, there are a number of health concerns associated with eating hamburgers. Researchers wanted to know whether they could avoid these diseases by growing animal muscle tissue in the lab. In theory, lab-grown food should be safer, more humane, and less environmentally polluting than meat from farm animals.

FINDINGS: An international team of researchers found two new strategies for making processed meat that will be healthier to eat and can cut down on waste produced by conventional agriculture.

BOTTOM LINE: If sausages and chicken nuggets are made in a lab, they can be grown under sterile conditions, designed with less fat and more nutrients, and produced with less environmental pollution. According to study author Jason Matheny: "This would be

The Boston Globe

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the purest form of meat ever made, since we are really only growing the muscle."

CAUTIONS: While cultured meat may be technically feasible, researchers do not know how expensive the process will be. More importantly for consumers, we still do not know how these lab-grown burgers would taste.

WHAT'S NEXT: Researchers will investigate the nutritional contents of this foodstuff, and actually try to grow edible meat in the lab. They are also interested in comparing the time and labor costs for lab and farm meat.

WHERE TO FIND IT: Tissue Engineering, May-June 2005, and online at <http://www.liebertonline.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/ten.2005.11.659>

ZARA HERSKOVITS

GENETICS

Research explains why identical twins are different**STUDY'S PURPOSE:** While identical twins begin life with the same genetic material, they have unique personalities and often develop different diseases over the course of their lives. How does the environment influence the way that genes are expressed? [Continued...](#)

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