

Surprise Origin Of Stomach Cancer

Stomach cancer may not originate from the tissue of the organ itself, but from bone marrow cells, researchers have found, BBC News website said.

The cells appear to migrate to the stomach to try to repair damage caused by a bacterial infection.

The finding challenges many of the previous assumptions about how cancers originate, and could lead to new treatments, the scientists say.

Stomach cancer has long been associated with infection by the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, which is also known to cause ulcers.

It was thought that the bacteria irritated the lining of the stomach wall, causing tissue damage, inflammation and stimulating the cells to become cancerous.

The Columbia research, on mice, suggests that the presence of *H. pylori* is indeed a trigger for cancer.

But rather than malignancy originating in the cells of the stomach wall, it was traced to immature bone marrow cells.

It seems that these cells migrate to the stomach in response to the damage caused by *H. pylori* infection.

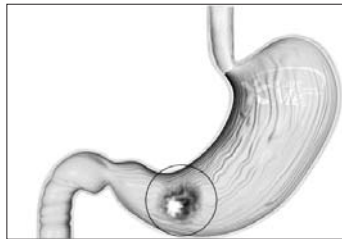
They try to repair the lining, but actually appear to be responsible for the onset of cancer.

Bone marrow cells in the mice were seen to start grafting on to their stomach lining after 20 weeks of infection.

The cells then started to mutate into abnormal shapes, similar to those in the early stages of cancerous transformation.

Researcher Professor Timothy Wang said, "This was an unexpected finding, which may lead to a re-evaluation of current assumptions about how all cancers originate."

"The implications of this study may lead to new methods of diagnosis and



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treatment of many cancers - particularly those that have been linked to chronic inflammation such as stomach, oesophagus, lung, pancreas, liver, etc."

Some scientists doubt the theory and suggest the cells could just be fusing with existing cells in the stomach.

Professor Wang accepted more evidence is needed to pin down exactly what is going on.

Emad El-Omar, a *Helicobacter* researcher at

the University of Aberdeen, said, "It's really quite a novel concept."

"It will set people to thinking quite hard about the origins of stomach cancer."

Professor Robert Souhami, of Cancer Research UK, said, "Helicobacter is known to be associated with cancer in humans so this very original and unexpected finding gives us a new insight into how gastric cancer might originate."

Every Person, a Potential Torturer

All humans are capable of committing torture and other "acts of great evil". That is the unhappy conclusion drawn from an analysis of psychological studies.

According to *New Scientist*, over 25,000 psychological studies involving eight million participants support this finding, say Susan Fiske and colleagues at Princeton University in New York, US.

The researchers considered the circumstances surrounding how individuals committed seemingly inexplicable acts of abuse in the midst of the US military's torture of Iraqi inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 and 2004. "Could any average 18-year-old have tortured these prisoners? I would have to answer: 'Yes, just about anyone could have,'" Fiske says.

Many forms of behavior, including acts of cruelty, are influenced as much by authority figures, peer pressure and other social interactions as by the psychology of the individual, she says.

"If we don't understand the importance of social context and accept that almost anyone could commit acts of torture under certain circumstances, then we are setting ourselves up for situations where Abu Ghraib [atrocities] will occur again," Fiske warns.

The researchers identified situations where individuals feel provoked, stressed or taunted—such as during war—as conducive to causing aggressive acts. And they say that the need to conform to their peer group and obey those in authority—or act in a way that they believe their superiors would approve of—could lead individuals to behave in a way that they would usually consider unacceptable.

"Certainly, acts of torture can be committed by almost everyone—not just psychopaths," says Ian Robbins, a clinical psychologist who has treated victims of torture and torturers themselves at the traumatic stress service in St George's Hospital, London, UK. "A process of 'grooming' occurs,

whereby the perpetrator is introduced to small acts of abuse—perhaps an occasional slap—and then over time these acts of abuse are built up to levels of extreme torture," he says.

"All this is carried out in a social context of acceptability, where the perpetrator is made to feel special for carrying out the abuse, and it is singled out as a special secret activity."

Fiske points out that the alienation and exclusion of certain groups renders them "contemptible, subhuman and disgusting" in the eyes of the torturer, making abuse of such dehumanised victims far easier to carry out.

And she points out that strongly cohesive social populations such as the military can either encourage prejudice—as in the case of the treatment of Iraqi prisoners—or actively discourage it. For example, the US military offers the country's best example of racially integrated cooperation between black and white Americans, she observes.

Lasers Zap Bad Breath

Laser treatment could cure bad breath, say Israeli scientists.

According to ananova.com, bad breath usually comes from the build up of bacteria around the teeth and gums due to poor oral hygiene.

But in some cases the tonsils are to blame, the Israeli team told *New Scientist*.

They found treating the tonsils with a laser for 15 minutes to combat bacteria could banish bad odors.

Yehuda Finkelstein and colleagues from the Meir Hospital at the Sapir Medical Centre in Kfar Saba say they successfully treated 53 patients in this way.

In the study, all of the patients had bad breath due to smelly tonsils rather than dental or gum problems.

The laser works by vaporizing the infected tissue and seals the crypts by creating scar tissue that bacteria cannot colonize.

All of the patients were then treated with a one 15-minute session of laser

therapy to the tonsils. The were re-examined four to six weeks later to see if the treatment had worked.

Twenty-eight of the patients were cured after the first session and the rest were cured after a further one or two sessions, according to the researchers.

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