Common Cold Virus for Bladder Cancer

The cancer is particularly difficult to treat with traditional therapies.

September 16, 2019 By Liz Highleyman

A virus that causes the common cold could help treat bladder cancer, according to a recent study. Hardev Pandha, PhD, of the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom, and colleagues treated 15 people with noninvasive bladder cancer using Cavatak, or coxsackievirus A21, a naturally occurring strain of the common cold virus.

One week before they underwent surgery to remove their tumors, the virus was inserted into the bladder via a catheter. Cavatak appears to work by infecting malignant cells and replicating inside them until they rupture and die. The virus also causes inflammation that triggers a cancer-fighting assault from the immune system. Post-surgery analysis revealed cancer cell death in a majority of tumors, and one person had no remaining trace of cancer.

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