Clues to the Association Between Fusobacteria and Colon Cancer

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Matthew L. Meyerson, MD, PhD (Damon Runyon Fellow ’95–’98), of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, and colleagues, reported a study that provides clues to the role Fusobacteria may play in the development of human colon cancers. Meyerson was one of the first scientists to discover that Fusobacteria, which normally inhabit the mouth, are closely associated with colon cancer cells but not normal colon cells. Researchers have now confirmed the presence of Fusobacteria in up to half of all colon tumors. They went on to show colon cancer cells that had metastasized to the liver continued to be infected with Fusobacteria. Interestingly, tumor cells given an antibiotic called metronidazole that fights Fusobacteria showed decreased cancer cell proliferation and slowed tumor growth. The paper, published in Science, suggests that targeted approaches for colorectal cancer treatment directed at Fusobacteria should be pursued.

Read more about the researchers’ findings here.

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