Aspirin may lower the risk of pancreatic cancer

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The use of aspirin at least once per month is associated with a significant decrease in pancreatic cancer risk, according to results of a large case-control study presented at the AACR 102nd Annual Meeting 2011, held here April 2-6.

Xiang-Lin Tan, Ph.D., M.D., a research fellow at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., said the findings from this large collaborative study are preliminary and do not encourage widespread use of aspirin for this purpose.

"The results are not meant to suggest everyone should start taking aspirin once monthly to reduce their risk of pancreatic cancer," said Tan. "Individuals should discuss use of aspirin with their physicians because the drug carries some side effects."

For the current study, Tan and colleagues enrolled 904 patients who had documented pancreatic cancer and compared them with 1,224 healthy patients. All patients were at least 55 years old and reported their use of aspirin, NSAIDs and acetaminophen by questionnaire.

Results showed that people who took aspirin at least one day during a month had a 26 percent decreased risk of pancreatic cancer compared to those who did not take aspirin regularly. The effect was also found for those who took low-dose aspirin for heart disease prevention at 35 percent lower risk, according to Tan.

The researchers did not see a benefit from non-aspirin NSAIDs or acetaminophen. "This provides additional evidence that aspirin may have chemoprevention activity against pancreatic cancer," said Tan. He added that more data must be gathered before we can prove a real benefit.

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

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