New-old cancer cure hiding in plain sight

January 7, 2014  •  Dr. Micozzi

We have a new weapon in the fight against cancer. Well, really it’s an old weapon, as I’ll explain in a moment. But emerging research shows that this decades-old generic drug may boost survival rates for breast, colon, lung, prostate, liver, endometrial, and pancreatic cancers. And it may even prevent cancer survivors from developing secondary cancers. Plus, it costs just pennies a day per pill.

Experts estimate that this drug—used mainly to treat another common condition—already prevents 150,000 cancer deaths each year. And it’s not even widely acknowledged as a “cancer drug.’’

Best of all, it’s derived from an ancient herbal remedy.

Of course, I’m talking about Metformin. It’s one of the very few drugs on the market today that you’ll hear me praise. It’s a safe, effective drug used to control blood sugar in Type II diabetics. And now, as I said above, emerging evidence suggests that it’s an effective weapon against many types of cancer as well.

None of this really surprises me. Because, as I also mentioned earlier, the drug derives from the ancient herbal remedy known as French lilac, or goat’s rue.

In medieval Europe, men and women drank tea made from French lilac to combat everything from the plague to frequent urination. Of course, today we know that frequent urination is a sign of diabetes. But it only took a few hundred years for Big Pharma to realize they could turn this ancient remedy into a drug they could patent.

Of course, the patent on Metformin expired in 2002. So nobody paid much attention to it in the research world until very recently.

It happened when doctors started to notice that their Type II diabetes patients who took Metformin didn’t develop cancer like most of their other patients. Especially pancreatic cancer, which is so common among Type II diabetics. So, for many years, endocrinologists held this open secret that Metformin could help prevent pancreatic cancer.

In time, the research world began to catch on to their secret. And it turns out that pancreatic cancer isn’t the only type of cancer thwarted by Metformin.

In 2006, researchers working with breast-cancer cells found that Metformin increased the activity of an enzyme involved in tumor suppression. Since then, research into Metformin and cancer continued to grow. As I mentioned earlier, newer research suggests that Metformin may also work to treat colon, lung, prostate, liver, and endometrial cancer as well.

We already know that Metformin helps prevent cancer in Type II diabetic patients. In fact, researchers recently examined 20 studies with more than 13,000 patients. The patients all had developed cancer as well as Type II diabetes. The researchers found that patients who took Metformin had a better survival rate than patients who took another diabetes drug.

And last year, the largest clinical trial ever for testing Metformin against cancer completed its enrollment phase. Next, this trial will administer Metformin to cancer patients who don’t have Type II diabetes.

So how exactly does Metformin combat cancer?

For one thing, cancer cells thrive with higher levels of sugar in the blood. It supports their rapid growth. Cancer also appears to like high insulin levels. The pancreas produces more insulin when blood sugar is not getting into the tissue cells, as is the case with diabetes. In fact, this helps explain why Type II diabetes patients run a higher risk of developing cancer.

Interestingly, most “standard” cancer treatments ignore these basic facts. Oncologists often encourage their patients to eat high calorie, high sugar diets filled with milkshakes and empty carbs. And they even administer “medical foods” with these constituents. This is supposed to prevent cancer cachexia, or metabolic wasting. But in reality, this sugar-laden diet can feed the cancer cells more than it helps normal cells.

But take away the excess sugar in the blood, and cancer cells can’t thrive.

This is exactly what Metformin does. It cuts off the sugar supply to cancer cells. Metformin also helps with overall loss of excess body weight. It lowers your blood sugar, and in essence, puts your tissues on a diet. And we have known for decades that both animals and humans placed on caloric restriction for extended periods have longer lifespans.

Despite all its promise against cancer, Metformin still doesn’t garner much interest among cancer specialists, or oncologists. Perhaps because Metformin doesn’t cost anywhere near the $50,000 per
typical cancer treatment regimen.

Last April, I attended a major annual cancer research meeting in Washington, D.C. Thousands of scientists gathered to hear the latest results on cancer treatments. But the meeting room was only half-full when scientists began presenting their remarkable findings about Metformin. I just couldn’t understand why more cancer researchers and oncologists wouldn’t want to hear some of the best news in years about treating cancer.

Despite the lukewarm reception by oncologists, Metformin is sticking around for good. One hundred-twenty million people worldwide already use it daily to treat their Type II diabetes. So this wonderful secret cure is already hiding in plain sight. Plus, Metformin is FDA approved. So it will avoid the lengthy approval process many other cutting-edge cancer drugs must face.

But remember Metformin can cause vitamin B depletion. So if you take Metformin, make sure to take a good, quality B-supplement as well. That is a good example of true “complementary medicine.”

Sources:

In Cancer, Daily Dispatch