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Aspirin and risk of fatal colon cancer

Sir,

Recent studies have demonstrated that regular use of aspirin at low doses may reduce significantly the risk of fatal colon cancer.^{1–3} However, how aspirin might produce this beneficial effect is unknown. I suggest two possible mechanisms.

First, it has been recently demonstrated that aspirin enhances the production of interferon- α and interferon- γ ,^{4–6} and these two compounds have been shown to produce beneficial effects in the treatment of colon cancer.^{7–12} In addition, it was recently found that the level of interferon- γ in extracts of human colorectal adenocarcinomas decreased progressively with the advance of clinical stage, and the levels of interferon- γ of the patients with distant metastases were significantly lower than those of the patients without distant metastases.¹³

Second, production of tumour necrosis factor- α from the macrophages increases with the addition of aspirin,^{14,15} and the tumoricidal activity of this monokine is well established.

Thus, the suggested above two mechanisms for aspirin reducing the risk of fatal colon cancer seem to be reasonable.

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