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,4,5 and these two compounds have been shown to produce beneficial effects in the treatment of colon cancer.6–12 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.

References

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