

War on terror may help war on cancer

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The war on terror eventually may help supply the world of medicine with new weapons to attack cancer and other illnesses, scientists say.

Methods used to track drugs, explosives, counterfeit bills and bioweapons can assist medicine thanks to a study that challenges the dogma water inside cells is chemically identical to water outside cells.

The method, known as "stable isotope ratio mass spectrometry," can determine where a substance was produced by "weighing" various forms or isotopes of an element in the substance -- such as the ratio of rare oxygen-18 to common oxygen-16.

Additional uses of the method may result from a study challenging the long-held belief that water moves so rapidly through cell membranes and pores that the water inside cells is chemically identical to the water outside cells.

Scientists from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Wash., published the study in the online edition of the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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