

Worms to help in medical research

November 7 2005

Scientists at Edinburgh University in Scotland say the parasite called helminth could help find new treatments for conditions like asthma and hay fever.

They found that the tiny worms can fool the body's immune system, reports the BBC. They hope to copy the worms' survival tactics as they work on suppressing allergic reactions, thereby reducing the need for drugs or vaccinations.

The scientists think the breakthrough could also help curb tropical diseases such as filariasis and schistosomiasis which affect one in four people in the world, the report said.

"Perhaps we can borrow a trick from parasites and employ the molecules which suppress the immune system to treat these auto-immune disorders," said Professor Rick Maizels. "The project therefore offers potential for new treatments of diseases in both the developed world and the disadvantaged countries of the tropics."

The findings were published in the Journal of Experimental Medicine.

In the United States, scientists found last year helminths, such as roundworms and threadworms, may prevent the inflammatory bowel disorder Crohn's disease.

Copyright 2005 by United Press International

Citation: Worms to help in medical research (2005, November 7) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-11-worms-medical.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.