

Study: Frankincense may fight some cancers

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A Virginia Tech scientist says frankincense oil might be useful in treating malignant melanoma -- an aggressive cancer that attacks humans and equines.

Approximately 54,000 malignant melanoma cases are diagnosed annually, according to the American Cancer Society, and there are many similarities between malignant melanoma in horses and malignant melanoma in people.

Recognizing the opportunity for translational research, John Robertson, a professor in the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech, has been studying the disease and an experimental treatment involving frankincense oil.

Frankincense is a botanical oil distillate made from fermented plants that contains boswellic acid, a component known to have anti-neoplastic properties.

During a recent presentation before a regional meeting of the American Cancer Society in Roanoke, Va., Robertson -- director of the college's Center for Comparative Oncology -- said he's found the oil has fairly selective anti-tumor activity and doesn't appear to disrupt normal cells.

"I think this research on frankincense oil suggests that this ancient medicine may have significant modern uses for chemotherapy of non-resectable malignancies," said Robertson.

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